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Quasimodo and the Nobel Prize

FILIPPO DONINI

[Professor Filippo Donini is Director of the Institute of Italian Culture in New York. Hence, it seems particularly fitting that he should present to the *Italian Quarterly's* readers the Italian poet who has just received the world's most coveted literary award. Professor Donini is himself a specialist in contemporary Italian literature and maintains, by reason of personal inclination as well as of his position, a lively personal contact with its major representatives. He is the author of essays on the "crepuscolare" poet Corazzini (*Vita e poesia di Sergio Corazzini*, Turin, De Silva, 1949), and has written widely in Italian and foreign publications. Before coming to New York Professor Donini occupied similar posts in Dublin, Brussels and London.]

The Italian poet who was awarded the poetry prize this year in Stockholm is certainly one of the greatest writers of our century; and every Italian who loves poetry rejoiced at the award. The recognition given to contemporary Italian poetry, the solemn crowning of the career of this son of a Sicilian railwayman, and the fact that the whole world was asked to take note of his existence and poetic importance, all these give pleasure.

Among the many inanities which appeared in the press on the day following the award was the statement that without the Nobel prize, Quasimodo would have been "nearly unknown," even in Italy. Nothing could be more untrue. Few poets have been more readily and constantly greeted by the favor of critics and of those whose judgement has weight in the world of letters. In Italy, Quasimodo has gone from one success to another: his early recognition by Solaria (1930) and Montale (1931) was followed by the essays of Bo, Macrì, and Contini, then by his work on the weekly *Tempo* (1938-40), by the enthusiasm of the critics of the

Left for the poet of the Resistance and of social progress (1946-49), and finally by the Taormina Prize which he shared with Dylan Thomas (1953). Although celebrated by the hermetic critics of the 1930's, and in the first rank of those hermetic poets who have been accredited and recognized as such, Quasimodo was not involved in the discredit into which hermetic poetry fell after the war. His latest work was perfectly in sympathy with the changed political and literary climate, and he was once again cherished and quoted as an example of the model *poete engagé*, that is, the poet abreast of his times.

The turning-point of Quasimodo's career, as everyone knows, was the war, and particularly the period from 1943 to 1945. Between the poems written before those years and those written after them there is a considerable break, a difference which might in fact be seen as an antithesis. Certain of Quasimodo's polemical affirmations, first stated in 1946 and later confirmed in the *Discorso sulla poesia* (*Discourse on Poetry*) of 1953—such as “the duty of poetry is to make man anew;” “the poet knows today that he cannot write idylls or lyrical horoscopes;” the exhortation to read Dante in order to forget Petrarch; and the insinuation that, today, to write “Vaghe stelle dell'Orsa” (“Lovely stars of the Great Bear”) could be an act of cowardice—might make one believe that Quasimodo had repudiated the productions of his hermetic period. That is not actually the case. There is a poem in the *Falso e vero verde* (*False and True Green*), page 34, which clarifies Quasimodo's *engagé* attitude in regard to the hermetic Quasimodo; he speaks here of “verses of love and loneliness” whose story ended “when trees and walls fell down.”

The reasons given for awarding the Stockholm prize to Quasimodo leave no doubts as to why he met with the approval of the Swedish judges. He was awarded the prize “for his lyrical poetry which with classical fire expresses the tragic experience of life in our time.” That statement certainly does not apply to what he wrote before 1943. Yet I am convinced that the hermetic Quasimodo is the better one.

The lyrical intensity, the essential concentration, the marvellous balance between sound and meaning which are the high point of the *Oboe sommerso* (*The Sunken Oboe*) and of the greater part of the poems collected in *Ed è subito sera* (*And Suddenly It Is Night*) were never again equalled after the poet had been seduced by other mirages. It is true that in *Giorno dopo giorno* (*Day after Day*), *Falso e vero verde*, and *La vita non è sogno* (*Life Is Not a Dream*) one can still find beautiful poems; but not one which has the force and beauty of those published in the slender volume of 1932. Among these, the one which is rightly most famous is the title poem. These thirteen short lines still have for us today the fascination which made them dear and unforgettable when they appeared for the first time.

. . . Un oboe gelido risillaba
gioia di foglie perenni,
non mie, e smemora;
in me si fa sera;
l'acqua tramonta
sulle mie mani erbose . . .

All the experience of French symbolism, together with a Hellenism bare of any pedantry, was combined to produce these happy results. In the contrast between the "sospirati abbandoni" and the gelid voice of the oboe we felt a drama which was not accidental, not limited to a brief period in time and to a single place, but an eternal and universal drama, inherent in the human condition of all times and all places — as is not true of political and social dramas, however terrible and urgent they may be. It is the drama of man who longs for happiness, and of a serene, beautiful, indifferent Nature who seduces him and deceives him. The poet's acceptance of sadness, which was not resignation, seemed to us to give voice to the lament of all humanity, and the crystal clear and imperturbable oboe, bursting forth amidst a murmur of leaves and forest waters, moved us in the same way as Debussy's *Après-midi d'un faune*. The noble language enriched with resonances from Mallarmé,

the condensation of many myths and metamorphoses of Greece in a single word ("mie mani *erbose*"), seemed to us a very high peak of poetry. And we took pleasure in tracing back to Shakespeare, whom Quasimodo was then beginning to translate, that most beautiful title (*Antony and Cleopatra*, IV, iii: *Music of the hautboys is under the stage* . . . "Music i' the air"/"Under the earth.")

Quasimodo never wrote anything else so lofty. The skilful administrator of his poetic estate who was able to delete from the poem "Vento a Tindari" ("Wind at Tindari"), when it was reprinted in Milan, the lovely and significant line "Tra gente petrosa ai sogni" ("among people stone-shielded against dreams"), in order not to displease the Milanese, knew how to go about winning approval with occasional verse inspired by the destruction of the city and other clamorous political affairs, but he himself became "stone-shielded against dreams." Or rather, he strove to become so, but being a poet he did not completely succeed; fortunately for us, and in spite of the political affirmations of his *Discorso sulla poesia*, he still sinned from time to time with the outraged Muse of the idyll, and he has written in recent years some very beautiful poems, especially on Sicily and childhood. But where the new Quasimodo is the most *engagé*, he is at times absurdly far from poetry: it is not enough for him to chose dutiful themes (Lunik, the atom bomb, the war in Korea), he actually adopts dutiful language, and employs the slogans of poor journalists ("batteva *un no* dentro di noi *un no* alla morte," and "*In ogni no* che pare una certezza") ("*a no* was beating *a no* within us to death," and "*In every no* which seemed a certitude"), confirming the saying that the translator of the Greeks and Shakespeare is now translating from *Pravda*.

We prefer to return to the "Oboe sommerso," to the "Salmo per l'angelo infernale" ("Psalm for the Infernal Angel"), to the "Amen per la domenica in Albis" (Amen for Low Sunday), to the beautiful poems of Quasimodo's great poetic season, which the judges in Stockholm have underestimated, revealing themselves to be a bit hard of hearing. But Italy has become accustomed to the deafness

of those judges! There was Pascoli, and Sully Prudhomme got the prize; there was D'Annunzio, and the prize went to Deledda . . . It is fate that our best poets have no luck, in Stockholm.

Essential facts of Quasimodo's biography

Born in 1901 at Modica, Sicily (usually his birthplace is listed as Syracuse, even in the *Treccani Encyclopaedia*, but Oreste del Buono, in an interview with Quasimodo published in *Epoca*, Milan, November 1st, 1959, gives it as Modica). He has Greek blood: his grandmother was from Patras. His father was a railwayman who had worked in Gela and Catania; after the earthquake of 1908 he was sent to Messina. Those ruins were among the strongest impressions of the boy poet, who began to write verses when he was thirteen. Quasimodo studied at the Technical Institute of Messina, and then at that of Palermo. He intended to become an engineer, and enrolled at the Polytechnical Institute of Rome, but had to leave in order to take an office job with the Italian Civil Engineering Department, first in Reggio Calabria, and then in various other Italian cities; finally he settled in Milan. He left the Civil Engineering Department in 1938, when he was offered a professorship in Italian Literature at the Conservatory in Milan, where he is still teaching.

Quasimodo's literary friendships began in Messina (Salvatore Pugliatti, Glauco Natoli), and continued in Florence, as a result of his connection with the review *Solaria* which began in 1930 (Alessandro Bonsanti, Elio Vittorini — also a Sicilian and the son of a railwayman — Eugenio Montale, Carlo Bo, and Oreste Macrì). *Solaria* published three of his poems in March 1930. Montale reviewed *Acque e terre* (*Waters and Lands*) in *Pegaso*, 1931, with memorable words: "To a poet who seems consciously to take the road of an art closed to the understanding and appreciation of most people, we would by no means dare to give advice." Quasimodo's close association with hermetic poets (and critics) lasted until the war, which naturally

was a crisis for hermeticism. The poems of *Con il piede straniero sopra il cuore* (*With the Foreigner's Foot upon One's Heart*), written in 1944 and 1945 when Milan was occupied by the Germans, and published in 1946, marked the beginning of his new style. He was a member of the Italian Communist Party for a few months in 1946, and left it without repudiating either its ideology or its actions. He visited Russia in 1958, and, following a heart attack there, was treated for several months in a Moscow clinic.

WORKS BY SALVATORE QUASIMODO

POEMS:

Acque e terre (1930)
Oboe sommerso (1932)
Odore di eucalyptus e altri versi (1933)
Erato e Apollion (1936)
Poesie (1938)
Ed è subito sera (1942)
Con il piede straniero sopra il cuore (1946)
Giorno dopo giorno (1947)
La vita non è sogno (1949)
Il falso e vero verde (1955)
La terra impareggiabile (1958)

TRANSLATIONS:

Lirici greci (1940 - 1944 - 1945 - 1951 - 1958)
Il fiore delle georgiche di Vigilio (1942 - 1944 - 1956)
Catulli Veronensis Carmina (1943 - 1955)
Dall'Odissea (1945 - 1951)
La Bibbia di Amiens J. Ruskins (1946)
Le Coefore di Eschilo (1949)
Shakespeare: Romeo e Giulietta
Billy Budd (un atto di H. Melville), (1949)
Il vangelo secondo San Giovanni (1950)
Shakespeare: Riccardo III (1952)
Poesie di P. Neruda (1952)
Shakespeare: Macbeth (1952)
Euripide: Elettra (1954)
Shakespeare: La tempesta (1956)
Molière: Tartufo (1958)
Antologia Palatina (1958)
Poesie di E. E. Cummings (1958)
Shakespeare: Otello (to be published).

ANTHOLOGIES:

Lirici minori del XII e XIV secolo (1941)
Lirica d'amore italiana dalle origini ai nostri giorni (1957)
La poesia italiana del dopoguerra (1958)

ESSAYS:

Petrarca e il sentimento della solitudine (1945)
Discorso sulla poesia (1953)

Poems by Salvatore Quasimodo

Oboe sommerso

Avara pena, tarda il tuo dono
in questa mia ora
di sospirati abbandoni.

Un oboe gelido risillaba
gioia di foglie perenni,
non mie, e smemora;

in me si fa sera:
l'acqua tramonta
sulle mie mani erbose.

Ali oscillano in fioco cielo,
làbili: il cuore trasmigra
ed io son gerbido,
e i giorni una maceria.

Davanti al Simulacro D'Ilaria Del Carretto

Sotto tenera luna già i tuoi colli,
lungo il Serchio fanciulle in vesti rosse
e turchine si muovono leggere.
Così tuo dolce tempo, cara; e Sirio
perde colore, e ogni ora s'allontana,
e il gabbiano s'infuria sulle spiagge
derelitte. Gli amanti vanno lieti
nell'aria del settembre, i loro gesti
accompagnano ombre di parole
che conosci. Non hanno pietà; e tu
tenuta dalla terra, che lamenti?
Sei qui rimasta sola. Il mio sussulto
forse è il tuo, uguale d'ira e di spavento.
Remoti i morti e più ancora i vivi,
i miei compagni vili e taciturni.

The Sunken Oboe

Miser pain, withhold your gift
in this my hour
of sighed-for abandon.

An icy oboe reweaves
joy of leaves forever green,
not mine, and draws off memory;
evening comes within me;
the water wanes
upon my grassy hands.

Wings flutter and change in the dimming sky:
the heart migrates
and I am fallow,
and rubble are the days.

(translated by Stanford Drew)

Before the Effigy of Ilaria Del Carretto

Now beneath the tender moon, your hills,
along the River Serchio young girls in dresses
of red and sea-blue gently glide,
So in your sweet time, dear; and the Dog Star
loses its hue, receding with each hour,
and the seagull grows wild upon the shores
left barren. Lovers go walking blissful
in the September air, their gestures
play accompaniment to shadows of words
that you know. They have no pity; and you,
held within the earth, what are you mourning?
Here you have remained alone. My shudder
is perhaps yours, half of rage, half of fear.
Remote are the dead and even more the living,
my cowardly and taciturn companions.

(translated by Cosimo Corsano)

Lettera alla madre

“*Mater dulcissima*, ora scendono le nebbie,
il Naviglio urta confusamente sulle dighe,
gli alberi si gonfiano d’acqua, bruciano di neve;
non sono triste nel Nord: non sono
in pace con me, ma non aspetto
perdono da nessuno, molti mi devono lacrime
da uomo a uomo. So che non stai bene, che vivi
come tutte le madri dei poeti, povera
e giusta nella misura d’amore
per i figli lontani. Oggi sono io
che ti scrivo.” — Finalmente, dirai, due parole
di quel ragazzo che fuggì di notte, con un mantello corto
e alcuni versi in tasca. Povero, così pronto di cuore,
lo uccideranno un giorno in qualche luogo.
“Certo, ricordo, fu da quel grigio scalo
di treni lenti che portavano mandorle e arance,
alla foce dell’Imera, il fiume pieno di gazze,
di sale, d’eucalyptus. Ma ora ti ringrazio,
questo voglio, dell’ironia che hai messo
sul mio labbro mite come la tua.
Quel sorriso m’ha salvato da pianti e da dolori.
E non importa se ora ho qualche lacrima per te
per tutti quelli che come te aspettano,
e non sanno che cosa. Ah, gentile morte,
non toccare l’orologio in cucina che batte sopra il muro,
tutta la mia infanzia è passata sullo smalto
del suo quadrante, su quei fiori dipinti:
non toccare le mani, il cuore dei vecchi.
Ma forse qualcuno risponde? O morte di piet ,
morte di pudore. Addio, cara, addio, mia
dulcissima mater.”

Letter to My Mother

"*Mater dulcissima*, the mists are now descending,
the waters of the Naviglio thrust haphazardly upon the dykes,
the trees become heavy with rain, burnt with snow;
here in the North I am not sad; I am not
at peace with myself, but I do not await
forgiveness from anyone, many owe me tears
as man to man. I know you are not well,
that like all poets' mothers you live, poor
and just in the measure of your love
for far-away sons. Today I
write to you. "At last, you will say, a word
from that boy who fled at night, wearing a short cape
and with a few verses in his pocket. Poor, generous at heart,
they will kill him, somewhere, someday.
"Of course, I remember, it was from that dismal yard
of slow-moving trains carrying almonds and oranges
to the mouth of the Imera, the river filled with magpies,
salt and eucalyptus. But now I thank you,
such is my desire, for the irony mild as yours,
which you laid upon my lips.
That smile spared me from tears and sorrows.
And little it matters if now I have a tear or two for you,
for all who await, as you await,
no knowing what. Ah kind death,
touch not the ticking clock upon the kitchen wall,
all of my childhood elapsed upon the enamel
of its face, upon its painted flowers:
touch not the hands, the hearts of the old.
But perhaps, someone replies? O compassionate death.
modest death. Goodbye, dear, goodbye, my
dulcissima mater"

(translated by Carlo L. Golino)

Strada di Agrigentum

Là dura un vento che ricordo acceso
nelle criniere dei cavalli obliqui
in corsa lungo le pianure, vento
che macchia e rode l'arenaria e il cuore
dei telamoni lugubri, riversi
sopra l'erba. Anima antica, grigia
di rancori, torni a quel vento, annusi
il delicato muschio che riveste
i giganti sospinti giù dal cielo.
Come sola allo spazio che ti resta!
E più t'accori s'odi ancora il suono
che s'allontana largo verso il mare
dove Espero già striscia mattutino:
il marranzano tristemente vibra
nella gola al carraio che risale
il colle nitido di luna, lento
tra il murmure d'ulivi saraceni.

Street in Agrigentum

There a wind persists that I remember ardent
in the manes of the swerving horses
racing along the plains, wind
that stains and gnaws the sandstone and the heart
of the mournful caryatids, overturned
in the grass. Old soul, greyed
with bitterness, you turn back to that wind, sniffing
the delicate moss that covers
the giants toppled by heaven.
How lonely in the space that is left you!
And greater your grief if you hear still the sound
which draws far off toward the sea
where Hesperus already streaks the morning:
the jews-harp sounds sadly
in the throat of the carter who goes
slowly up the hill, pure with moonlight,
in the rustling of the Saracen olive-trees.
(translated by Stanford Drew)

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A Deep Wind: "Quasimodo's Tindari"

GLAUCO CAMBON

(Professor Cambon, who at present teaches English and Italian literature at the University of Michigan, is a member of that brilliant group of Italian "americanisti" who have done such outstanding work in the field of American literature.

A graduate of the University of Pavia, Professor Cambon has also studied at Columbia University, and has been active as a translator, critic, and lecturer. In 1956 he published a significant work on American poetry: *Tematica e sviluppo della poesia americana*. He contributes regularly to important reviews in Italy and in the United States, and since 1956 he has been co-editor of *Aut Aut*.)

Salvatore Quasimodo certainly has an important place in the contemporary Italian Pleiad, even if some of his recent work seems disappointing (1); and to be sure, careful reservations on his ultimate validity as a poet, at least in his post-war phase, have come from some critical quarters (2). His relative position in the hierarchy culminating in Ungaretti and Montale is still a matter of debate; yet when Spagnoletti resents the "literary" quality of his diction (De Robertis would say "Parnassian"), it has to be added in all fairness that this is also a plausible part of his Southern heritage—the rich feeling for words as intrinsic melody. Words, in the Italian South, are something to be savored and treasured, almost a palpable entity, something indeed you can caress; there is an ineradicable oratorical tradition there, dating from Cicero's days and, in the island which was the heart of "Magna Graecia," from his Hellenic forerunners. It affects the local imagination, it accounts ultimately for the excessive genius of a D'Annunzio; one could also take the Spanish domination into account, along with Verga's reaction against its baroque residues. A Northerner very often misunderstands this Southern feeling for

words as hollow rhetoric, while it clearly stems from the contemplative bent of the Southern mind—and it is no accident that most of the great Italian philosophers, from Aquinas to Bruno, from Telesio to Campanella, from Vico to Croce, were children of the South.

In Quasimodo's case we should consider the additional factor of Sicily's insular mentality—not as an excuse, but as a characterization. Likewise, his translation of the Greek lyrical poets (3) before the last war was somehow a return to the Mothers—to the deepest available layer of his culture. That's why his approach is so different from Ungaretti's (even though, as Macrì points out, he did learn a great deal from the latter's technique), as well as from D'Annunzio's, whose mellowness is more "Spanish baroque" than Hellenic melody. From the outset he sought to capture intense, fleeting sensations, in a less public way than the Abruzzese poet; and since attempts like *Oboe Sommerso* seemed to get involved in too private a language, he turned to a more straightforward diction with his war poems (4) and to an outspoken political motivation, which became a manifesto in the preface to *Il falso e vero verde*. There are many things of note in his postwar books, especially in *Giorno dopo giorno*, and one would not want to pass up the "Epitafio per Bice Donetti" in *La vita non è sogno*; but his rejection of hermeticism, itself an episode of the general shift in tone and themes that the war brought about in Italian literature, need not be shared by the evaluating critic. We grant him the right to a self-renewing gesture, even if certain results baffle us; at the same time his pre-war experiments continue to attract the best part of our attention. There was some involved diction there, to be sure, due perhaps to an attempt to graft Surrealism on the trunk of his native culture; some clever, self-conscious verbal effects; but also a liberating gust:

A nord della mia isola e nell'est
è un vento amaro portato dalle pietre.
A primavera
apre le tombe degli Svevi:
i re d'oro si vestono di fiori. (5)

The very fact that we are quoting these lines from memory is telling. Without wanting to "regionalize" Quasimodo, we like the Sicilian in him. The wind of Sicily blows in another of his pre-war poems, "Vento a Tindari," which critics like Anceschi and Giannessi find unreservedly successful; and it would be hard to deny the ethereal quality of its music, really an internalized melody that harks back to the supple articulation of Pindar, Ibbotson or Alcman. (Romance cadences, gravitating on the end rhyme and on the set pentameter mold, can be something a Latin poet wants to get away from, after so many centuries of tyranny.) At the same time it is a deep wind, and it proved perhaps too deep for an otherwise accurate translator, George Kay, who deserves much praise for his selection and English rendering of Italian verse (6). The syntactical ambiguities that trapped him may be partly intentional, but a central meaning has to be there, and clearly traceable, if the poem exists beyond the Poundian dimensions of "melopoeia" and "phonopoeia." So let us try to hunt down the elusive "logopoeia." Here is the text:

Vento a Tindari

Tindari, mite ti so
 fra i larghi colli pensile sull'acqua
 dell'isole dolci del dio,
 oggi m'assali
 e ti chini in cuore.

Salgo vertici aerei precipizi,
 assorto al vento dei pini,
 e la brigata che lieve m'accompagna
 s'allontana nell'aria,
 onda di suoni e amore,
 e tu mi prendi
 da cui male mi trassi
 e paure d'ombre e di silenzi,
 rifugi di dolcezze un tempo assidue
 e morte d'anima.

A te ignota è la terra
 ove ogni giorno affondo

e segrete sillabe nutro:
altra luce ti sfoglia sopra i vetri
nella veste notturna,
e gioia non mia riposa
sul tuo grembo.

Aspro è l'esilio,
e la ricerca che chiudevo in te
d'armonia oggi si muta
in ansia precoce di morire;
e ogni amore è schermo alla tristezza,
tacito passo nel buio
dove mi hai posto
amaro pane a rompere.

Tindari serena torna;
soave amico mi desta
che mi sporga nel cielo da una rupe
e io fingo timore a chi non sa
che vento profondo m'ha cercato.

The musical impact of the poem is difficult to resist, right from that first line, so subtly modulated by pause, alliteration and vowel-play into a prolonged sigh. The fierce sweetness of nostalgia is well expressed by the strong verb "m'assali" in the third line, immediately followed by the contrasting mildness of the fourth: "e ti chini in cuore." "M'assali" is psychological and conveys the *suddenness* of a cherished vision in memory; "ti chini" is primarily visual and dynamic, developing the adjective "pensile" of line 2 into a slow movement, as if of a camera eye that runs over the native landscape but at a leisurely pace, so as to dwell on every detail. There are hills in the picture ("colli," line 2), so we are not surprised to find them *sloping* in the heart. But the poetical surprise is there; and along with the passionate vocative, the overtone "you recline" to be heard in "ti chini" personifies the remembered island village, Tindari, as a goddess of love, or more simply as a beloved woman the speaker has left behind and cannot forget. This personifying impulse, so natural in the situation of exile, finds additional support in the Greek sound of the lovely

place name, which may be said to govern or even originate the whole poetic utterance, as it certainly generates its first line through reproductive echoes. The tone of the poem is delicately set by the prolonged stress on the first syllable of *Tindari*, which also happens to be the absolute beginning of the first line in the first stanza; and we shall see the magic word reappear at the beginning of the last stanza, likewise alliterated in a significant way: "*Tindari serena torna . . .*" Quasimodo's ear for the inherant charm of Hellenic names in Sicily is well known; for instance, in one of his pre-war books he has such a passage as this:

. . . di fiumi il cui nome greco
è un verso a ridirlo, dolce . . .

Throughout the poem we are analyzing, however, the personification is suggested above all by the insistent *tu* and *te* of the middle stanzas (2, 3 and 4). In Stanza 3 the glimpsed woman-figure takes more concrete shape, with a "dress" (*veste notturna*) and a "lap" (*sul tuo grembo*). The mythical shape finally becomes mythical action at the end of Stanza 4, where the mysterious goddess is accused of having "put [the poet] in darkness, to break bitter bread."

And this is the crux of the poem. For, while there is no doubt as to its informing theme of exile and yearning, we have to read that second-person pronoun pretty carefully if we want the poem to make sense in every part and not just approximately. Mr. Kay translates the poem in such a way as to identify the addressed entity with *Tindari* from beginning to end; and such reading would seem warranted by the unquestionable connection of the second-person pronoun with *Tindari* in Stanza 1 ("*mite ti so*" . . . "*e ti chini in cuore.*") Since the first stanza sets the tone, and since the intimate address involving a "thou" persists without an apparent break down to the last stanza but one, the conclusion that the silent recipient of the wistful words remains the same throughout appears justified, the more so as the first time the key pronoun emerges after Stanza 1, it is in the wake of a copulative and not adversative preposition:

e tu mi prendi . . .

The attractive force of that seemingly coördinating arrangement is such that a first reading generally supports Mr. Kay's interpretation (7). Serious trouble begins to develop with the last stanza, which he unsuccessfully tries to force into the mentioned mold by rendering the verbs in the two governing clauses as imperatives:

Tindari, come back serene;
sweet friend, wake me
that I may lift myself from a rock to heaven
and I pretend fear for whoever does not know
what deep wind has searched me. (8)

In themselves, the two governing clauses which open the stanza could also be imperative—although one might take exception to the archaism of “mi desta” which is very unlikely in Quasimodo despite his hankering for occasional preciousities. If he wanted an imperative there, he would say “déstami,” beyond any doubt. But the main objection to Mr. Kay's approach here arises from syntax. How does he account for the clause “and I pretend fear”? It is clearly coördinated with one of the previous clauses; the “and” (Italian “e”) leaves no doubt. Now, it cannot have any coördination with the secondary clause “that I may lift myself,” for that is the subjunctive mood and ours is in the indicative. But on the same showing our lost sheep of a clause cannot be coördinated to the main governing clauses in this complex sentence (“come back serene” and “sweet friend, wake me”), for they have been made imperative, and only an imperative clause could be put by their side as a peer in the hierarchy of discourse. The jarring effect of such an attempt leaps to the eye, and nobody can seriously contend that Quasimodo's experimental temper would deviate into this kind of childishness, he being the careful craftsman we know. Even Marinetti, who had no use for syntax, respected his own convention of anarchy by extricating the words from any logical nexus, for instance, in his *Battle of Adrianople*, which consists of a series of flashbulb-vocables to be read as so many exclamations, in a strongly impressionistic but non-logical context. No convention of this kind appears in the poem at hand, or in Quasimodo generally.

Things begin to make sense when we assume that "Tindari serena torna" and "soave amico mi desta" are statements, not invocations or commands; for then we have no difficulty in relating the moot clause to them as a coördinate:

Tindari comes back, serene;
a sweet friend wakes me
that I may lean out into the sky from a cliff
and I pretend fear, *etc.*

Even apart from the fact that Mr. Kay violates the text by making the "soave amico" of Line 2 the same thing as Tindari, though Quasimodo makes the latter personification feminine ("serena") and the unnamed friend masculine ("amico," not "amica"), one readily sees that this conclusive stanza works much better, poetically speaking, in the dreamy tone resulting from our syntactical palimpsest. It is the finality of quasi-miraculous vision that aptly crowns the poem of longing, a candidly reported state of grace, not a contrived gesture. It returns to the attitude of the beginning, both by naming Tindari again and by resuming the theme of the wind: the balmy "pinewood wind" of Stanza 2, in which the apparitions of memory magically dissolved, is now a "deep wind" that "searches" the poet leaning from one of the native hilltops. A real case of animation, in the etymological sense of the word; for here the wind becomes itself a mysterious character answering the call of the poet; the search has been mutual, and we can assume that this wind is not only the spell of memory, as it was at the outset, but also its transfiguration into poetry—in short, the breath of *inspiration*.

This return of the poem to its own beginning is therefore also an expansion and a deepening of the initial statement; and what happens in between will represent the ideal *distance* traveled by the poet's imagination, so as to justify the final return as more than a rhetorical pose. For the return is specifically expressed by the opening line of the last stanza:

Tindari serena torna;

and, being an imaginative one (the only kind really possible for a poet), it counterpoints the reality of exile as stated by the introductory line of the preceding stanza:

Aspro è l'esilio,

just as the "amaro pane" (bitter bread) on which the poet is now feeding in the alien Northern city (Milan, his present residence) offsets the "isole dolci del dio" and their sweetness "un tempo assidua," or, to put it in Kay's own words, their "blessedness once unfailing" (Stanza 2). These, then, are the two poles between which the poem moves, as a result of its author's concrete experience: South and North, Sicilian paradise and Lombard fog, native countryside and industrial metropolis. Ultimately, the antithetic terms of this geographic binomial receive their full meaning in the landscape of the soul, where they become "objective correlatives" of innocence and experience. Like so many writers before him all over the world, Quasimodo yearns for his lost boyhood—a theme by no means uncommon in his verse.

This demands that, in the course of the poem, the present situation of the poet, the unloved city of the North, be dramatically operative. But Mr. Kay, with his monistic interpretation of the "thou," makes Tindari the source of everything bad that happens to the poet: the "death of soul," the "early anxiety to die," the "love . . . a shield against sadness," the "muted step in the gloom," the "bitter bread." Or must we assume that Quasimodo's attitude to his native island is ambivalent? If so, note of "exile" fails to achieve its due focus, and with it the poem as a whole. Its polarity, as described above, postulates a firmer design. And if we go into the relevant details of the middle stanzas, our assumptions will have a chance to be definitively tested. The crucial point will have to be that line in Stanza 2 where the pivotal "tu" pronoun reappears for the first time after its unambiguous start in Stanza 1:

e tu mi prendi
da cui male mi trassi

Mr. Kay, as we saw, relates this to Tindari:

and you take me
from whom I wrongly drew myself away

His choice of the relative pronoun "whom" stresses the personifying element, and it must be acknowledged as a sensitive solution within its context; for it opens another interesting perspective, the emergence of a youthful love for a Tindari woman. Ultimately, however, this solution insists on the identity of this "thou" with the initial "thou"; the departure from Tindari was one and the same thing with the forsaking of that girl. Syntax, though, is harder to please. Mr. Kay has to read "male" as an adverb ("wrongly"), and even though his solution is perfectly legitimate if the two lines are taken out of context, what happens to it when the sequel is kept in mind must give us pause. Once again, it is a matter of coördination; for how are we going to account for

e paure d'ombre e di silenzi,
 rifugi di dolcezze un tempo assidue
 e morte d'anima

unless we line up all these somber matters with the vocative "tu" as equals in syntactic rank, and therefore complementary subjects of the action expressed by the verb "mi prendi"? The consequence is that Tindari, believe it or not, and/or the girl emotionally associated with it, must become the cause of fear and death of the soul. This is hardly to be explained in terms of the airy beginning, which declares the *mildness* ("mite ti so") of Tindari by placing it in a sunny Mediterranean seascape, or of the intense conclusion, where Tindari reappears as a *serene* image ("Tindari serena torna"). Whoever or whatever that "tu" is, it cannot be Tindari; this much is certain, in view of the poem's own *logos*. Apart from this, the coördination of "tu" and "paure," "refugi," etc., would be very awkward in Italian from the point of view of pure syntax alone. The alternative is to read "male" as a noun, and relate to it the "paure" and the rest:

and you take me
 from whom I received evil (or *derived* evil)
 and fears of shadows and silences,
 retreats of once assiduous joy,
 and death of the soul.

One sees pretty well how "fears," "retreats" and "death of the soul" develop the idea of "evil" and are justified in the syntactical nexus proposed above. Perhaps the "rifugi di dolcezza" (retreats of joy) can be better explained as an apposition of "shadows and silences," but that is a minor point.

Yet we haven't disposed of the problem inherent in "e tu mi prendi," by no means an easy one. The speaker of the lines under analysis has been mentally revisiting the idyllic scene of his boyhood, climbing again, as it seems to the excited memory, the wooded hills of Sicily with his lost play-fellows; then this cherished picture fades into another, of opposite, or at least very different, nature: the happy troop of boys "recede in the air" (s'allontana nell'aria) to leave him alone, a prey to a sinister entity:

e tu mi prendi
da cui male mi trassi

If this entity were Tindari, then the verb "mi prendi" would be anticlimactic. Tindari has already "taken [him] by storm" in the beginning, or "assailed" him, as Mr. Kay chooses to render the "oggi m'assali" of Stanza 1. A word-conscious artist like Quasimodo does not weaken his discourse like that. Besides, in the aural dimension (and Quasimodo's poetry is eminently addressed to the ear) the stress falls on *e tu* (and you), not on the verb as such; it's a matter of dramatic tone, both because the moot pronoun emerges as central to the development of the poem and because the effect of contrast required by the previous fade-out naturally brings our voice to dwell on the beginning of this pivotal line. Anyway we can clearly see how, yielding to the imperious seduction of memory, the speaker cannot stop at the climax of Eden-like youth, but has to go on rehearsing the cycle of his life, and then he relives in brusque alternation the crisis of his life: the transition to an experience which was for him the revelation of evil. "Morte d'anima" (death of soul) antiphonally balances the "onda di suoni e amore" (wave of sounds and love), in this crucial stanza. The law of logical consistency, coinciding in this case with the requirements of dramatic structure, compels us to identify the

"tu" of the following stanzas (except the last one, which has no such pronoun) with this mysterious "thou" of evil import. That it cannot be Tindari is easily seen from the further shift at the end; there, the "gloom" in which the poet has been put to "break bitter bread" is superseded (momentarily in terms of daily life, but forever in the imaginative circle of this poem) by the returning light of airy Tindari, and a friend who must be one of those briefly evoked boys of Stanza 2 wakes him to the luminous wind. Also, the posture of speech changes from the dominant second-person verbs and pronouns to a third-person statement attuned to wonder. The basic gesture of the poem as utterance seems therefore to consist of a spiraling progression from the clearly identified "thou" (Tindari) of the beginning to the ambiguous "thou" of Stanza 2, and finally to the objective, but visionary "she" (Tindari again) of the end. The pronominal ambiguity of the two "thous" (a provisional one, in our opinion) strongly resembles, as a structural device, a similarly intriguing shift in Hopkins' *Carrion Comfort*, which begins by addressing Despair and then turns to the unknown antagonist who is ultimately identified as God, but still in the same terms, so that the reader has difficulty disentangling the two "Thous" from each other.

In Quasimodo's poem the ambiguities persist locally; for instance, we still don't know what to make of the second "thou" beyond associating it with evil, frustration and death as stated in Stanza 2, 3 and 4. It is opposed to Tindari as ambiguity itself to clarity; Tindari is named, very auspiciously, and this "dark lady" remains nameless; her very emergence in the world of the poem is furtive. That she could be a woman who initiated the poet to evil, by alluring him into exile, is possible; but she can also be the non-Tindari world, and by implication Milan, the bleak city where he struggles to keep spiritually alive. Stanza 3 can be read in itself as addressed to this "dark lady," who is also desired by the poet when he thinks of the "joy not mine" lying in her "lap." If so, she is far away now, her fateful work done; or at least she is not with her lover, the poet, but with somebody else. The main point is that she "does not know" the

land in which daily the speaker "sinks" (to retrieve his roots in the imagination) and "nurtures secret syllables," i.e. feeds the plant of poetry as a defense against urban sterility. There is "another light" here (*altra luce*), not the glorious Southern sky. Towards the end of Stanza 3, the "dark lady" grows to mythical proportions by acting as a power of destiny:

... nel buio
dove mi hai posto
amaro pane a rompere.

At this point, the intimation that the dark lady is the Northern city itself seems strongly warranted. The poet has no choice; he has to make a living here, and the world of his happy youth is gone forever, except in the return of memory and imagination; and a city has a way of enveloping us, it can really "take" us, seduce us away from our green birthplace, then reveal itself as a despot; a city, in short, has the ways of a woman.

Presumptuous as any explication must sound when the author discussed is alive and available for comment, we are willing to take the risk, for we believe that a lyrical poem should contain its clues in its objective structure, so that our experiment may result in a verification of its validity. That there may be intentional ambiguities we are ready to concede; Mr. George Kay is a friend of ours, and what we find questionable in his interpretation is by no means a foolish mistake, but the result of a *parti pris* that can muster some evidence in the text. He is too brilliant to make foolish mistakes. But even Empson would recognize here that the ambiguity locally centering on lines like "e tu mi prendi/da cui male mi trassi" merely *hovers* on the focal meaning, as an ironic echo; and the same is true of Stanza 3, which can be reversed, if taken out of context, to mean that Tindari does not know the Northern land of exile where the poet is "sinking" daily (both dying and trying to put forth new roots). These ambiguities become significant only if they can be played out against a logically recognizable backbone of discourse, which is, to our mind, contrapuntal but not at the price of destroying central consistency.

NOTES

- (1) This applies particularly to *Il falso e vero verde* (Mondadori, Milan, 1956).
- (2) For instance, Giacinto Spagnoletti in *Antologia della poesia italiana 1909-1949* (Guanda, Parma, 1952); G. De Robertis in *Scrittori italiani del Novecento* (Le Monnier, Firenze, 1946) and in *Poeti lirici moderni e contemporanei* (Le Monnier, Firenze, 1945); Luciano Anceschi in the introductory essay to Anceschi-Antonielli, *Lirica del Novecento* (Vallecchi, Firenze, 1953), pp. LXXXVIII-LXXXIX. It has to be added that Anceschi's evaluation is on the whole very sympathetic and positive.
- (3) Salvatore Quasimodo: *Lirici greci*, Edizioni di Corrente, Milano, 1940, and again Mondadori, Milano, 1944, 1951.
- (4) Salvatore Quasimodo: *Giorno dopo giorno* (Mondadori, Milano, 1947).
- (5) This passage is from a poem in *Poesie* ("Primi Piani," Milano, 1938) and it is noteworthy for its mythical transfiguration of Sicilian history, the Swabian kings being, of course, Frederick II who held court at Palermo and gave impulse to the first literary school of Italian poetry, and his unlucky descendants destroyed by the Angevins, namely Manfred, Corradino, Enzo. For the legendary aura that enveloped them, and for the consequent inspiration to Italian poetry, compare Dante's *Inferno*, Canto XIII, and *Paradiso*, Canto III, 118-120, where the Swabian dynasty is metaphorically described as a series of mighty winds.
- (6) *The Penguin Book of Italian Verse*, introduced and edited by George Kay, 1958, pp. 408-409.
- (7) An interesting experiment was afforded by a seminar in contemporary Italian literature this writer gave at the University of Michigan; the discussion shed much light on the deceptive quality of some passages in "Tindari," and he is indebted to some hints that came to him this way.
- (8) Mr. Kay does not arrange his English translation by lines, but simply appends it to every page as a footnote; here we take the liberty of dividing it into lines to facilitate precise reference in the detailed discussion we are offering, and it must be said that Mr. Kay's scrupulous word-by-word rendering makes the job much easier.

Italian Fiction from Pavese to ^{Pasolini}~~Pratolini~~
1950-1960

DANTE DELLA TERZA

The decade 1950-1960, which opened with the tragic death of Pavese, now closes with the posthumous appearance of his *Fuoco grande*. This story, written in collaboration with Bianca Garufi, is not of great importance in itself, but its publication seems to me a significant literary event because it is a symbolic homage to a writer whose problems play an important part in recent Italian culture. If the forties witnessed Pavese's narrative activity, the decade which is now coming to a close has seen the consecration of the Pavese myth, which if it is not as flamboyant as other more famous myths, due to Pavese's own gravity and modesty, is not less tenacious. The poetic and autobiographical works that appeared after his death favored this reappraisal of Pavese as a character, as a witness of our times, and one is not surprised to see him appear precisely as such in a novel of love and ideology: *La Raganella*, by the young Tuscan writer, Fernando Tempesti. If the moment for criticism of Pavese does not yet seem to have arrived, if myth and reality still seem to be inextricably linked where he is concerned, it is because his restlessness, his dissatisfaction with his literary resolutions (which change with each new book), mirror the dilemma of the Italian writer today.

In Italy it is not possible, as it is in France, for a writer to turn his back on tradition and by ignoring it or attacking it, simply liquidate it. The Italian writer must realize that for him description of the human condition is possible only in a specific, historical context, and that it changes as the reality it describes changes. Questions about literature and the life of the nation, popular language and

literary language, imitation of reality and mythical transformation of it, relationship between the spoken and the written word, between language and dialect, are asked again and again as Italian society reacts to the crisis of the modern world.

If Pavese is the writer who best mirrors the complex revision now taking place in the whole of contemporary Italian society, it is clear that he must also be considered as the witness of a literary epoch which has not yet come to its conclusion. Let us take this story of his, *Fuoco grande*, for example. The book has two authors, Pavese, who wrote the parts concerning the hero Giovanni, and Bianca Garufi, who wrote those concerning the heroine, Silvia. It is evident that the idea of entrusting the task of describing the feminine protagonist to a woman stems from an experimental preoccupation with verisimilitude and has a place in the argument against the habitual descriptive manner of the naturalistic novel which makes a single author responsible for the life and autonomy of a large number of characters. However, this attempt to prevent the refraction and dispersion of the author's "I" in more than one character proves itself to be purely illusory; not only because of the ultimate consequences of such a method, but also because a character makes himself in his turn the center of a world of relationships and the refraction that has been avoided reproduces itself by other means. Thus what actually happens in the story is that Bianca Garufi tries to make the language of Silvia worthy of that of Giovanni, tries to imbue her character with the sensibility and drama of the traditional world of Pavese. The language in which the story is told, as is so often the case with Pavese, is tragic even before the tragedy is visible to the reader in terms of action; and it is precisely in this absolute tension of passions that Bianca Garufi finds the least opportune solutions for her character, that her language is the least adequate. Expressions like "shred the silence" or "strangle the murmurs," are attempts on her part to achieve expressive invention through the expedient of the verbal baroque, in a situation whose tragic weight is already overpowering in itself.

As for Pavese, he tries to mold the speech and action of his character into a permanent relationship that defines the character. When he writes "always between us there was that savage, explosive discord, that raging tenderness that is the upheaval of the country become city," he relives, in the realm of the psychological analysis of instinct, a historical-cultural relationship, that of the city and the country, which interests him not only as a writer, but as a theorist of the novel as well. However, if any historical relationship has survived at the end of the story it is not to be found in this miserably unsuccessful attempt on the part of Giovanni, a man of the city, to give a broad, stable foundation to his human relationship with Silvia, but rather in Silvia's debate with herself, a debate that is forgotten when the savage call of instinct and nature claims her whole being, reducing her life to a mere destiny.

In Pavese, free will, which according to his beliefs should transform destiny into freedom, myth and instinct into history, is the piano key that does not sound. On the one hand there is Pavese's myth of freedom — on the other Pavese's own characters, tragically immersed in a nature whose roots are botanical and mineral, chained to the land. In his best works, the poetic success of his characters makes up for their absence of free will. This poetic success does not lie in any progression of the characters toward a complex system of life in an historical context, nor in any deep psychological probing of the characters themselves, but rather in their dynamic movement toward their destiny. The analysis is present in the representation itself, and the scenery, so to speak, is always conditioned by the action. In a word, Pavese comes through as a really great writer when he makes us see the dynamic laws of a static world, when he brings into focus, reversing the natural dialectic of things, the imperceptible movement of being which the layman's eye might not perceive. This is no small achievement; it can be considered the most important stylistic lesson Pavese gave to his contemporaries.

The history of Italian fiction in the last decade can be told either from a naturalistic, regional point of view, or

by a delineation of personalities bound together by affinities in taste or theory. The regional grouping — based on local color and folklore, and occasionally on a common atmosphere and sense of history that brings together widely differing writers — is limited by its purely physical continuity which tends to accentuate the characteristic to the detriment of the true. There are certain cases, such as that of Pasolini, where regionalism is not a fact of nature, but a conquest, and the use of a certain dialect not a characteristic note but a scholarly, philological discovery that does not preclude the use of other dialects (Pasolini writes in the Friulan as well as the Roman dialect) or of an inter-regional language, literary Italian. There are novels where atmosphere and color are not tied down to a regional narrative, such as Pasinetti's *Venetian Red*, where the title serves to establish a subtle *Geheimniss* between the tone of a city and the drama of an epoch and to announce the other two periods of the novel in which regional experience becomes national and European experience, as the color of Venice is transformed first into the yellow ochre of the imperial Roman marble of Fascism and then into the bloody grey of Berlin at the time of the Nazi massacres. However, in general, it can be said that a common origin and landscape is not enough in itself to create an artistic affinity, and that the Tuscan Bilenchi, whose stories Vallecchi has republished, is closer to the Ligurian Calvino because of their common fable-making and fantastic heightening of reality, than he is to his compatriot Pratolini, who orients himself toward the historical novel. And Tomasi in his *Gattopardo*, while dealing with a subject analagous to that of his compatriot and precursor Federico de Roberto, turns rather to Stendhal and Proust as his natural masters.

These reservations, however obvious, are necessary at a time when regional and dialectal values have been strongly stressed as a result of renewed interest in a cultural decentralization which was forbidden by the Fascist regime. Let us now examine the other possibility. The only collective critical formula which has in the past had any success has been that of neo-realism. This formula has had considerable ill

luck; it underwent a veritable crisis in the middle of the decade on the occasion of the polemic discussions about Pratolini's novel, *Metello*. When we speak of neo-realism in the novel we must ask ourselves if we mean to refer to that documentary fervor common to both the cinema and the novel which followed the fall of Fascism and the complex experience of the war, or if on the contrary we are speaking of a precise literary technique. If the former is true, we can undoubtedly accept the value of the activity of the diarists who appeared just after the second world war, and agree with the critics who contrast the socio-historical character of Italian fiction after this war with the individualistic, moral character of the fiction written after the first world war, as represented above all by G. A. Borgese's *Rubè*. On the other hand, if by "neo-realism" we mean a particular style, things are infinitely complicated by the need to refer to the various definitions of reality given by writers and critics and to study the implications of the creative activity of individual narrators. And it is precisely in this technical field that the greatest discord reigns.

We notice a characteristic oscillation in Pavese. He opposes the sense of the real to literature and reality to classicism, (which is understood as bookish and rhetorical unreality), and maintains that when the things described really exist they have a greater meaning and a greater hold on the reader. But then he turns around and states that it is impossible and above all useless to render life as it is, and that it is not permissible to "abandon oneself on the pillow of a reality without myth." As Pavese clarifies his aversion to any form of documentary realism, we note a progressive change in his attitude toward the American novel which is one of the fountainheads of his culture: he comes to stress its romanticism of action over its realism.

Vittorini's position is clearer and more obvious. He distinguishes between realism — which, for him, is the discovery of new aspects of reality and a new representation of them — from neo-realism, which picks up and develops aspects of reality that have already been noticed and conquered by literature. He describes Pavese and Pratolini

as neo-realistic because they place their discovery of reality within the framework of the old stream of realistic literature.

But what do the critics mean then who insist that with his novel *Metello*, Pratolini passes from neo-realism to realism? Since the arguments concerning Pratolini's *Metello* are a sign of the decadence of the neo-realistic formula, we should perhaps examine for a moment the significance of this novel. *Metello*, which received the Viareggio prize in 1955, is described by its author as an *Italian* novel, because he has tried to place his story in a crucial moment in the history of the peninsula, at the beginning of the class struggles and the dawn of socialism. The book aims to be the story of a character who shares the life and destiny of a city, which is in its turn a link in the life of a nation. Pratolini thus attempts to rise above the regional milieu and achieve a national perspective. By strengthening the local, municipal roots of his inspiration he hopes to create the literature of an exemplary city which will mirror a certain epoch in Italian history. His novel aims to be "populist" since it tells the story of a bricklayer and his participation in the social struggles of his time, but it does not attempt to be folklore, because Pratolini tries to place his story within the framework of national life. *Metello* is intended to be realistic in the sense in which Gramsci uses the word "realism" when he hopes for a literature that will be at once popular and national. Whatever Pratolini's beliefs may be, it should be made clear right away that there is absolutely no trace in his *Metello* of the edifying book with a thesis, a point to prove, which places all the good characters on one side and the bad on the other. Opposing *Metello* and his companions is the construction boss Badolati, the representative of the managerial class. He is a complex, human character who has the author's sympathy. However, Pratolini's narrative honesty is opposed by his own temperament. This social, historical novel easily disintegrates into its regional, idyllic roots. *Metello*'s trip from the country where he has lived as a child to the city where he was born is reminiscent of the story of Filusella, a character from the novel *L'eredità* by a 19th-century Tuscan writer,

Mario Pratesi, who is little known but dear to Pratolini. Metello's affairs with insignificant, fatuous girls like Idina are pervaded by that proletarian Don Giovannistic atmosphere that was especially triumphant in Pratolini's "Ragazze di San Frediano." Pratolini is the successful portraitist of the street, the neighborhood; a society in miniature which is not really the city, even if the city is suggested or presupposed. In spite of its historical and social intensions this most ambitious neo-realistic novel does not really rise above the limits of the regional idyll, but is actually solidly implanted in its traditions.

The critical discussions of *Metello* differed widely. There were those who spoke of a great realistic novel, those who spoke of a novel with a thesis, an axe to grind, others who saw it as a chronicle. Some stressed the social-historical element as that which gave the story its force and coherence, others on the contrary felt that the twisting structure of the novel suffocated Pratolini's most authentic inspiration by forcing his narrative away from the poetic zone of memory. What is important for us to note here is the insufficiency of the neo-realistic formula and its generic rather than interpretive character, which was revealed precisely on the occasion of the discussions concerning Pratolini's book. I do not mean by this that the neo-realistic experiment had no meaning or did not exist as such. If it is true that every story is always realistic in the sense that it describes a reality, real or imagined, experienced by the writer, and always metaphoric in that reality is always transformed and rendered unreal by art, it is also true that all writers — whether they call themselves naturalists or "veristi," behaviorists, neo-realists, or objectivists — periodically feel the need for a return to reality, a bath in reality. This recurring nostalgia for reality, even if it be illusory, is an important literary fact and for this reason the neo-realistic formula has as much significance as any other.

It is necessary to note how the documentary literature of the chronicle that is the recognized foundation of Italian neo-realism grew and became more complicated during the decade. First it should be said that even if the narratives

of the war and the Resistance are not literature, they never become anti-literature. The epigraphic style succeeds very well in containing emotion and bringing events to the foreground, and for this reason there are certain books on the war and the Resistance (*Il sergente nella neve* by Rigoni Stern, *Le soldatesse* by Pirro, *Il campo degli ufficiali* by G. Carocci, *Primavera di bellezza* by Fenoglio) which will always be read with interest as well as emotion. However, today, this non-literary literature is moving in a more complicated and openly ambitious direction. One thinks of writers like Calvino, Bassani, and Cassola, and their literary evolution. From an ostensibly documentary point of departure, Calvino arrives at a fable; Bassani, through psychological probing, at the creation of a mythical provincial atmosphere, and Cassola at the picture of a breathless suffering humanity.

At the root of Calvino's most metaphorical, unreal stories there is always documentation, whether it be of real events he has heard about or experienced, or of events of purely literary origin. The opening pages of his intelligent story, *Il Visconte Dimezzato*, are a literary imitation of the ride of Christopher Rilke at the beginning of Rilke's famous poem, and the *Barone Rampante* reminds me of the historian Franco Venturi's discovery not so long ago of the Piedmontese Illuminist ideologist, Alberto Radicati di Passerano. It would seem that Calvino always depends on an exterior suggestion or documentary fact to set his fable-making in motion. But when he mirrors reality in his narrative, writing of an event he actually experienced himself, he immediately has to find a lyrical means of escape. For example, in the story, "Avanguardisti a Mentone" he writes of a Fascist youth who wanders through the deserted streets of an occupied French city in search of mystery. In the story "Paura sul sentiero," a messenger who crosses the mountains on a bicycle, going from one group of partisans to another, seems to fly on the wings of his imagination. There is always this lyrical flight in Calvino's works. Just how these two fundamental aspects of his personality, invention and documentary realism, complement each other, is clearly

seen in some of the stories that he has recently published.

Bassani also writes about the Resistance and the war, but all his stories have the same locale, Ferrara. Like his great compatriot, Ariosto, who could not live far from the shadows of his lords, Bassani cannot succeed in locating a story outside the circle of his city walls. Ferrara is the protagonist of his stories, and it unifies a world of characters to whom Bassani gives psychological depth and dimension with a technique reminiscent of Svevo. The pages dealing with Via Salinguerra, Corso Mazzini, Corso Roma, and Corso Giovecca are filled with a poetry of the streets which, with its horizontal dimensions, gives his stories their structure. Recently, in the same context of the city, Bassani set aside his stories of the Resistance and successfully undertook a psychological story, "The Golden Spectacles."

In connection with Carlo Cassola, I remember some uncertain, timid, plotless stories published before the war in the review *Frontespizio*. And remembering them, I can understand what the experience of the war and the neo-realistic adventure meant for him. They gave him a stylistic organicity, health, and incisiveness that he did not have before, and a sense of human suffering and friendship that is acquired above all in supreme moments of our experience. Cassola now possesses, more than any of his contemporaries, a vivid, direct, incisive sense of language. Although his stories are occasionally mere sketches, he is capable of writing things of great beauty. He is an atmospheric writer, and for that reason his stories often have no conclusion or catharsis. The atmosphere of the Resistance is a propitious one for certain human revelations that arise in moments of extreme tension and suffering, but it is not the only one. Often Cassola describes the adventureless lives of lonely women, but he always sees them in their relations — however unsuccessful — with others, as part of a human community to which they after all belong. At times he is drawn by the solitude of the grief-stricken, withdrawn man, as in his most beautiful story, "Il taglio del bosco."

Cassola, Bassani, and Calvino, are the most conspicuous examples of this enrichment of the documentary experience.

But even in writers of widely differing origins, we find this dilemma of the relationship between a pressing reality of historical content and milieu, and the transfiguration of reality into fantasy. Let us consider a writer who this year published a very rich novel, P. M. Pasinetti, (*Rosso veneziano*, Rome, 1959). Pasinetti has written the story of a family of anti-fascist intellectuals during the period preceding the recent war. Here he finds himself between two dangers: the temptation of the naturalistic family chronicle and that of the historical documentary. These dangers are avoided with narrative intelligence, because we see the historical facts only as atmosphere, only through the effects they have on the action of the characters, and we see more of the supreme issues in the family chronicle than we do of its petty events. There is no *talk* of Fascism or Nazism, because they have become things, faces, images, that render life unbearable. It is interesting to note how this novel, so full of action and movement, which takes place in three capitals and whose fatherland is Europe itself, begins in a rapid but restrained manner with the emotion always controlled by a constant use of the conditional tense. The characters watch each other, study each other, anticipate each other's gestures. It is a language that, while bound to the objects it describes, is full of aristocratic vibrations. The story proceeds rapidly, but, at least at the beginning, the reader is not completely immersed in the action. Paolo Partibon, the painter, watches his sister, Ersilia, the custodian of the family memories, from his window, and anticipates all her future hypocrisies. He gives us the cruel image of a world seen from above, in which every human gesture is transformed into a habit. Family hypocrisy is cruelly depicted in Pasinetti as it is in Mauriac, but its most vitriolic effects are not shown through analysis. Rather it is Pasinetti's noble and distant attitude that makes you feel the emptiness of this fatal atmosphere. Thus when he must represent the horror of evil, he does not represent it directly, by a photographic description, but makes us see it through the horrified eyes of a child who comes upon two Fascists as she skips down the stairs.

In this last period of the decade we have witnessed a break-up of the compact critical formula of neo-realism in favor of a specific analysis of the manner in which each writer is neo-realistic; we should also note a constant shift of interest from problems of content to those of form, from the novel of a crisis (the neo-realistic novel) to the crisis of the novel. Though the novel of a crisis may interest only those involved in the crisis, the crisis of the novel cannot help being of interest to all writers. A recent essay by a Piedmontese writer, Elémire Zolla, "The Eclipse of the Intellectuals," presents in somber colors and with an extraordinary cultural richness the erosion made by the modern world on human intelligence. And this year, in the Roman review *Nuovi Argomenti*, there appeared a survey on the novel which asked writers and critics the explicit question: Is there a crisis of the novel? It is certain that the cinema and television have taken readers away from the novel and probably diminished the sale of certain popular novels, but this is not the point. When one speaks of complex literary crisis, one speaks of a phenomenon that oversteps national boundaries. Several years ago a French writer who has recently achieved a great deal of success, Nathalie Sarraute, wrote in an essay entitled "L'ère du Soupçon" of the ambition of present-day writers to depict a human reality void of psychological convictions; she noted that such ambitions are confirmed by the public's suspicion of the omniscient author who tries to speak for all his characters. She concluded by foreseeing the day when Joyce and Proust would be thought of as like those historic monuments one visits in a respectful silence with a rather vapid admiration.

How do Italian writers react when confronted with the verbal outrage and the imperious theories of the French objectivist "école du regard?" Do they orient themselves around the novel written in the first person or the novel written in the third person, the essay-novel, the psychological novel, or the purely representational novel? The critic can easily answer that all forms are legitimate if the resulting novel is a good one; the Italian writer of today must withdraw into himself and make his own choice. If there is a

crisis of the novel, it is salutary for him, because crisis for him means reflection, reappraisal, meditation. The solution he strives for is more one of language than of content. When, for example, psychology intervenes and illuminates an historical scene that appears to the author as a desolate plain, then we have one of the greatest novels since that war, Tomasi di Lampedusa's *Gattopardo*, written in solitude, in the company of Stendhal and Proust, and transcribed in a lucid bare style. When reflection and too much weighty culture saturate the intelligence of a writer, he can escape into dialect, as does C. E. Gadda.

Today as always, every Italian narrative leans toward one of two poles. On the one hand there is Boccaccio, the objective narrator capable of changing scenery into action, and on the other Manzoni, whose landscapes were permeated by history and moral meditations. There is Verga, who translated the words of his Sicilian fisherman into an Italian which rang with the sad cadence of their dialect, and Pasolini, the bilingual writer, determined in his dynamic choice and his rapid changes from dialect to literary language. Which side is Pasolini on as a writer? The influence of Verga is obvious in his two novels, *Ragazzi di vita* and *Una vita violenta*, the first, like *I Malavoglia*, is not description of a community, this time that of children of the Roman slums, and as Contini noted, it proceeds by means of lyric fragments. The second, like *Mastro Don Gesualdo*, centers on one character — a boy in the slums — and follows him through his adventurous life to his death. But what is peculiar to Pasolini is the synthesis in his language, the verbal compound. There are the conversations written in a competent Roman dialect with a philological care that is sometimes irritating; there is the landscape that is the prolongation of the boys' action and is seen through their experience and in their dialect; and finally there are the interventions of the writer expressed in literary Italian. There are pages of great beauty in these novels of Pasolini's, such as those, pervaded by a profound but contained emotion, that describe the stoic death of the boy Marcello in the first novel, and of Tommaso in the second. However, Pasolini's

talent, which is certainly real, is perhaps not best expressed in the extreme experimental character of these books.

If it is possible to generalize, taking the case of Pasolini and adding such writers as Arbasino and Pizzuto who represent, whatever their respective dates of birth (Pizzuto is 65), the latest group of newcomers, we can conclude provisionally by saying that the end of the decade finds the Italian writer sensitive to the historic upheavals of our time and determined to make a place for himself in the tradition of Italian fiction while assimilating the liveliest and most authentic movements of the contemporary novel. Torn between the traditional narrative classicism, the call of a realism that is "*engagé*," and the ever-changing suggestions of the *avant-gardists*, they confront the future with the same courage, the same weaknesses and hesitations, as those men whose stories they will perhaps tell one day.

NOTE

For the reader's convenience there follows 1) a list of the novels mentioned above and 2) the titles of several essays that directly or indirectly illustrate the problems we have examined.

- G. Bassani: *Cinque storie ferraresi*, Einaudi, 1955.
G. Bassani: *Gli occhiali d'oro*, Einaudi, 1958.
I. Calvino: *I racconti*, Einaudi, 1959.
I. Calvino: *Il Barone Rampante*, Einaudi, 1957.
C. Cassola: *Il taglio del bosco*, Einaudi, 1959.
C. E. Gadda: *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de Via Merulana*, Garzanti, 1957.
P. M. Pasinetti: *Rosso veneziano*, Colombo, 1959.
P. P. Pasolini: *Ragazzi di vita*, Garzanti, 1955.
P. P. Pasolini: *Una vita violenta*, Garzanti, 1959.
C. Pavese: B. Garufi: *Fuoco grande*, Einaudi, 1959.
V. Pratolini: *Metello*, Vallecchi, 1955.
F. Tempesti: *La raganella*, Feltrinelli, 1959.
G. Tomasi di Lampedusa: *Il Gattopardo*, Feltrinelli, 1958.
G. Cintioli: "Letteratura di guerra," *Menabò*, Torino, 1959.
"Le sorti del romanzo" in *Ulisse*, Fall-Winter, 1956-57.
O. Lombardi: *Narratori neorealisti*, Pisa, 1957.
"Nove domande sul romanzo," in *Nuovi Argomenti*, May-August, 1959.
C. Pavese: *Il Mestiere di vivere*, Einaudi, 1955.
C. Pavese, "L'Umanesimo non è una poltrona," in *La Rassegna d'Italia*, May, 1949.
A. Paolini: "Una ipotesi narrativa;" *Incidenza*, vol. I, 1959.

Leonardo's Last Drawings

CARLO PEDRETTI

[Mr. Carlo Pedretti, lecturer in Art History in the Art Department of the University of California at Los Angeles, has focused his studies on the main figure of the Renaissance in Italy: Leonardo da Vinci. He is the author of three books: *Documenti e memorie riguardanti Leonardo da Vinci a Bologna e in Emilia*, Bologna, 1953; *Studi Vinciani*, Geneva, Droz, 1957; and *Leonardo da Vinci, Fragments at Windsor Castle from the Codex Atlanticus*, London, Phaidon Press, 1957. Mr. Pedretti has also published many articles in various magazines, including *The Burlington Magazine*, *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, *L'Arte*, *Raccolta Vinciana*, etc. The present article represents a new contribution to the subject of his Phaidon book. Leonardo's sketch at Windsor Castle is reproduced by gracious permission of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and the drawings of the Codex Atlanticus are reproduced by permission of the Prefetto of the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Mons. Carlo Castiglioni.]

In the Royal Library at Windsor Castle I have found a drawing which may be considered as the latest by Leonardo da Vinci. It is the little drawing No. 12,470 representing the head and shoulders of a clean-shaven man, wearing a Florentine cap, almost in profile to the right, which I have identified as a fragment cut out at the end of the 15th Century from folio 103 recto-b of the Codex Atlanticus (Fig. 1-2).¹ The parent sheet of the Windsor fragment is in fact dated: "Il dj dellasensione ina[m]bosa/ 1517 dj maggio nel clu" (The Ascension Day at Amboise /1517, May, in the Cloux).²

This folio of the Codex Atlanticus, which is now preserved in the Ambrosiana Library at Milan, was written with the same kind of pen and ink which we can recognize in the Windsor drawing. Sir Kenneth Clark³ judged this as a unique example of this medium in Leonardo's *oeuvre* in the Windsor Collection. In describing it as "reed pen or brush"

he says: "The medium is almost unique for Leonardo, but perhaps it is by him, and quite early, as is suggested both by the costume and by the resemblance to the treatment of heads in the Adoration."

In another of Leonardo's drawing at Windsor Castle we find the same characteristics of the cap. This drawing is fragment 12,442, the so-called posthumous portrait of Lorenzo de' Medici; it comes from folio 329 of the Codex Atlanticus (see plate 23 of my Phaidon catalogue), and consequently it must be dated about 1485, five years after Leonardo's studies for the *Adoration of the Magi*. On folio 277 verso-a of the Codex Atlanticus there are also many sketches showing men's headgear of various shapes (Fig. 3); among them we can recognize the same kind of cap which Sir Kenneth Clark considered to be of quite early Florentine fashion. This folio of the Codex Atlanticus is very late, since it is of the characteristic type of blue paper used by Leonardo only after 1510.

Leonardo's last sheets in the Codex Atlanticus are generally concerned with geometrical studies, notes in connection therewith, and architectural or hydraulic plans which show the artist in his role of architect to Francis I in France.⁴ Drawings of a purely artistic nature are very rare,⁵ and many of them have been cut out, like the fragments now at Windsor Castle. For example, folio 174 recto-b and verso-b, like folio 103 recto-b, contains a lacuna corresponding to a fragment which has been extracted but not yet identified, though it was probably executed in reed pen in conformity with the rest of the sheet. As a result of a search carried out in relation to a chronological essay on the Codex Atlanticus folios,⁶ I noticed that in his later years Leonardo was using a very broad pen,⁷ frequently with the coarse paper which he began to adopt in his studies for the Trivulzio monument. Coarse paper was suitable for black chalk, as its rough surface facilitated shading effects, as the masquerade and deluge drawings in the Codex Atlanticus (Fig. 4) and at Windsor Castle (Fig. 5) show. In his last years, however, Leonardo did not use this type of paper exclusively. Folio 103 recto-b, from which the Windsor fragment 12,470 was taken, is smooth and more suit-

able for writing on. Many sheets of the French period contained in the *Codex Atlanticus* are of this type of paper. It is enough to mention folios 174 verso-c and 177 recto-a, where the notes in French relative to "Monsieur Lyonard Florentin peintre du Roy"⁸ are by another hand. Further examples of the same type of paper are in folios 296 recto-a and 290 verso-a (Fig. 6 and 7) containing notes on hydraulic devices in reed pen and ink. One testifies to the presence of the artists in France: "Ambosa a vna fonte reale senza acqua" (Amboise has a royal fountain without water). In the lower right-hand corner there is a note on painting near a sketch representing a seated man: "La figura effacta/allochio stabilito he /de veduta dj sito libero" (The figure is made to the defined eye and it is seen from free position). As regard to the writing and paper folio 103 recto-b is identical with folio 270 verso of the *Codex Arundel*,⁹ on which is the small profile on the right-hand side already mentioned in comparison with that of the Windsor drawing No. 12,470.

To this group of late drawings I am now proposing to add a drawing in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana (Fig. 8), which was first reproduced in 1784 from an engraving by Gerli.¹⁰ It is a fragment on coarse paper, 6.4 x 4.5 cm., with the irregular outline which is found in the fragments originating from the *Codex Atlanticus*. It represents the head and shoulders of a man, his hair cut like a friar's. The profile is seen from the right, the features being strongly marked, while the drapery is indicated with rapid strokes. The almost impressionistic effect is heightened by the absorbent quality of the paper, which has made the ink somewhat pale, with the soft strokes resembling brushwork.

In his old age Leonardo probably used a reed pen because it facilitated writing and drawing on semi-absorbent paper, and also because it produced an outline which certainly he found easier to read when his sight was beginning to fail. This medium becomes usual in the anatomical sheets produced after 1513, as may be seen for example in No. 19,093 (coarse blue paper) with the so-called Salay-type profile on its recto, which is to be compared with No. 12,443 r-v. This last drawing was cut out from folio 243 recto-a of

the Codex Atlanticus and it is reproduced as plates 14 and 15 of my Phaidon catalogue. Previously, Leonardo used a fine-pointed pen, having perhaps planned to adopt a fountain-pen as he did in folio 187 verso-b and 289 recto-c of the Codex Atlanticus. These folios are reproduced as plates 11 and 18 of my Phaidon catalogue.

We can see a representation of a reed pen in the so-called portrait of Leonardo's left hand¹¹ in a drawing probably made by Francesco Melzi on folio 283 verso-b of the Codex Atlanticus (Fig. 9). This is a sheet of very late period. It is on coarse paper and contains a wide patch corresponding to a "ghost drawing," as I have already recorded in Appendix E of the Phaidon catalogue.

Five months after the date of Windsor drawing No. 12,470, Cardinal Luigi d'Aragona paid a visit to Leonardo in the Castle of Cloux, and it is to the pen of his secretary, Antonio De Beatis, that we are indebted for the well-known report on the life of the painter at the age of sixty-five:

"... ben vero che da lui, per esserli venuta certa parallesi ne la dextra, non se ne può expectare più cosa bona; ha ben facto uno creato milanese che lavora assai bene, et benchè il predicto messer Lunardo non possa colorire con quella dolceza che solea, pur serve ad fare desegni et insegnare a gli altri."¹² (... Since he was then subject to a certain paralysis of the right side, one could not expect any more good work. He has given good instruction to a Milanese pupil [Francesco Melzi] who works very well. And although the aforesaid Messer Lunardo cannot colour with the same sweetness as he used to *he is still able to make drawings and to teach the others*).

This passage is not difficult to interpret, although it has seemed so to Sir Kenneth Clark and others. De Beatis states that, owing to a form of paralysis which had affected the right side of Leonardo's body, no further work of merit might be expected of him. That does not necessarily mean that Leonardo painted with his right hand, but rather that he no longer possessed the state of mind for painting with "that sweetness as he used." He was, however, still able to write and draw with his left hand, as may be seen from many

sheets of the Codex Atlanticus which derive from that period, the subjects of which are primarily scientific.

De Beatis' report is important also in relation to the sheets which have just been mentioned. They frequently contain notes on painting, many of which have been transcribed or elaborated in a hand which Calvi¹³ has identified as that of Francesco Melzi, the pupil whom Leonardo certainly chose as his assistant and transcriber, and the person to whom he had decided to entrust his manuscripts after his death. One of the precepts which best illustrates the idea expressed by De Beatis and which has to do with the "teaching of others" is to be found in one of the sheets of the Codex Atlanticus, containing architectural notes like those mentioned by Heydenreich¹⁴ as testifying to Leonardo's service with Francis I. On folio 184 verso-c, beside two notes "de' colori" (on colors) and "de' pictura ne' paesi" (on landscape painting), there is a note entitled "vita del pittore (filosofa) ne' paesi" (a painter [philosopher] in the country) which must also be considered from an autobiographical point of view:

"Al pittore è necessario le matematiche appartenente a essa pittura, e la privazione di compagnie che sono alieni dalli loro studi, e cervello mutabile secondo-la varia direzione delli obbietti che dinanti se li oppongano, e remoto da altre cure. E se nella contemplazione e definizione di un caso se ne l'interpone un secondo caso, come accade quando l'obbietto muove il senso, allora di tali casi si debbe giudicare quale è di più faticosa definizione e quel seguitare insino alla sua ultima chiarezza, e poi seguitare la definizione dell'altro; e sopra tutto essere di mente eguale alla natura che ha la superficie dello specchio, la quale si trasmuta in tanti vari colori, quanti sono li colori delli suoi obbietti. E le sue compagnie abbino similitudini co' lui in tali studi, e nolle trovando, usi con sé medesimo nelle sue contemplazione, che infine non troverà più utile compagnia."

("The painter requires such knowledge of mathematics as belongs to painting, and freedom from companions who are not in sympathy with his studies, and his brain should have the power of adapting itself to the tenor of the objects

which present themselves before it, and he should be free from all other cares. And if while considering and examining one subject a second should intervene, as happens when an object occupies the mind, he ought to decide which of these subjects presents greater difficulties in investigation, and follow that one until it becomes entirely clear, and afterwards pursue the investigation of the other. And above all he should keep his mind as clear as the surface of a mirror, which takes on as many different colors as those of the objects reflected in it. And his companions should resemble him in a taste for these studies, and if he fail to find any such he should accustom himself to be alone in his investigations, for in the end he will find no more profitable companionship.”)

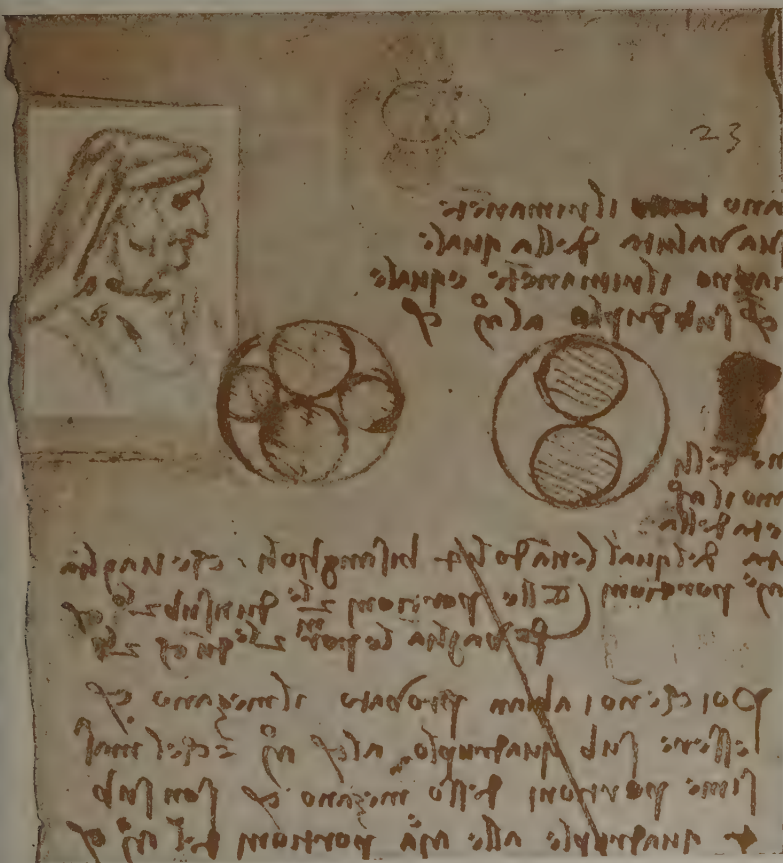
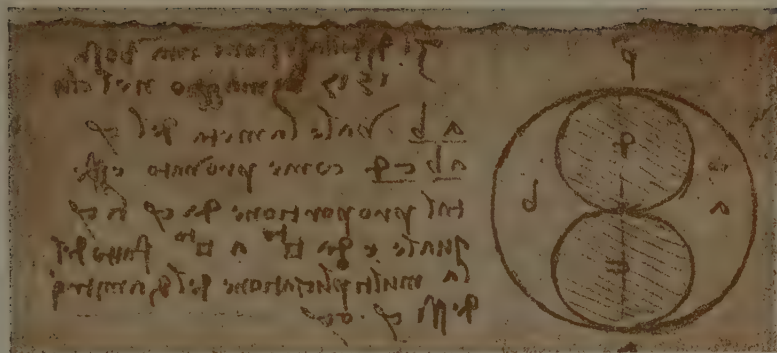
The idea of solitude at the end of this passage may agree with the profound expression of melancholy which pervades the last drawings of Leonardo, from the magical lady pointing into the distance (Fig. 10) to his drawings on the Deluge, many of which are on coarse paper. Probably, after the “certain paralysis” Leonardo gave up shading in black chalk, as well as sinuous pen lines. Even if he could still use his left hand, the right hand, which would be required to hold or move the paper in accordance with the movements of his left one, was no more than a dead weight. Perhaps it was for this reason notes and geometrical drawings predominate in his last papers. The drawings of human figures are limited to rare marginal sketches carried out in reed pen in the same style as the “lunulae,” the strokes somewhat nervous in their quality of expression. We are now able to identify this style as that of the last three years of Leonardo’s life. When considering the only drawing which may definitely be attributed to this period, Sir Kenneth Clark was inclined to regard it as a youthful work.

This drawing, like the others which we have dealt with, in fact resembles Leonardo’s early sketches, when his hand, although exuberant in its rendering of impressions, had as yet not been trained to the subtle search after the effects of shading. In his last drawings, Leonardo unconsciously tends to recapture these primitive forms, but with subject matter of

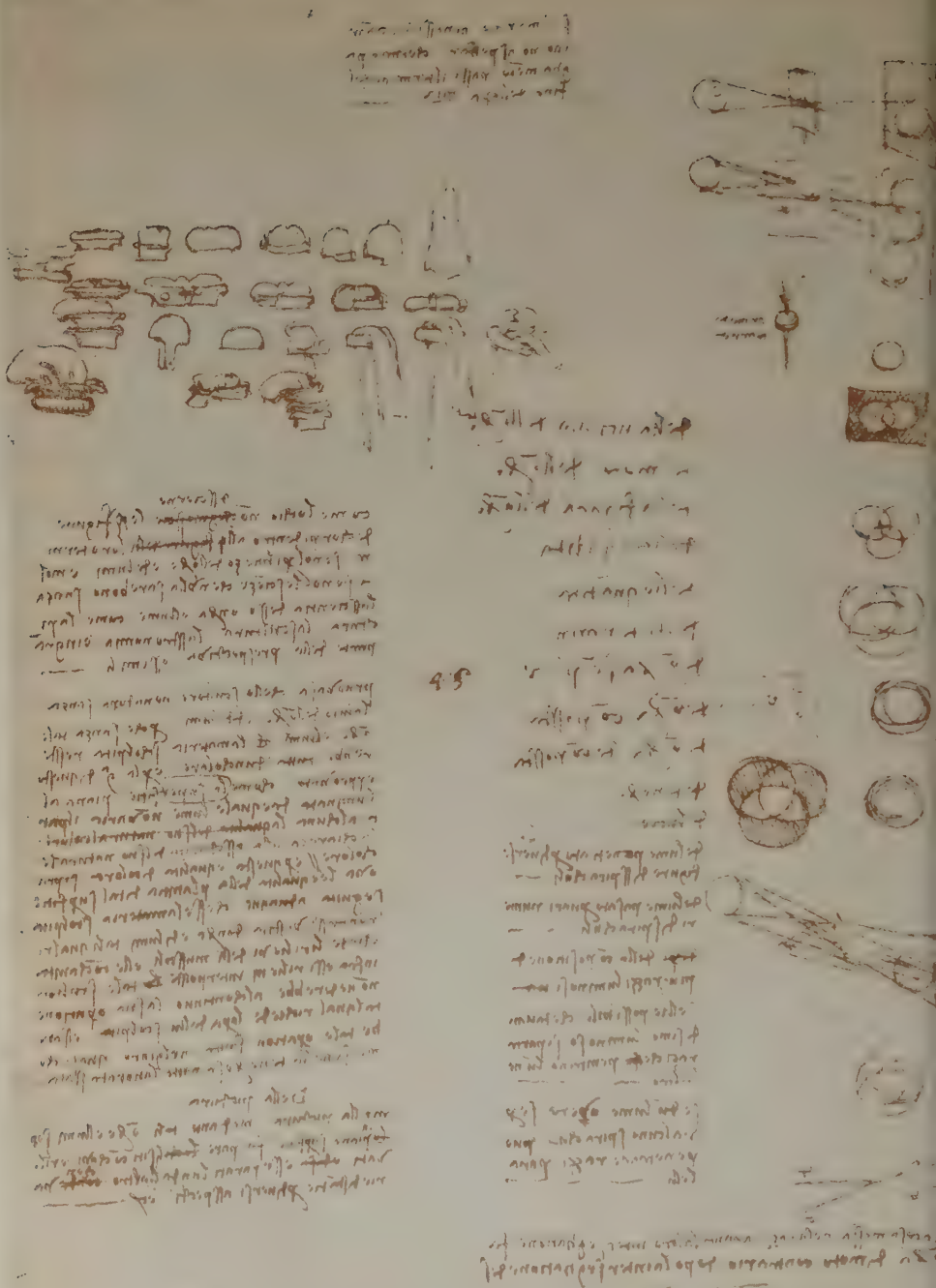
a dramatic vitality which seems sharpened by the foreboding of his now imminent end. The comparison seems to evoke Leonardo's reflection in connection with "our judgment" which "does not reckon in their exact and proper order things which have come to pass at different periods of time; for many things which happened many years ago will seem nearly related to the present, and many things that are recent will seem ancient, reaching back to the far-off period of our youth. . ."¹⁵

NOTES

- (1) *Leonardo da Vinci, Fragments at Windsor Castle from the Codex Atlanticus*, London, Phaidon Press, 1957, p. 37.
- (2) Ascension Day in 1517 fell on May 22nd. Cf. André Dezarrois "La vie française de Leonard" in *Etude d'Art*, Paris Alger (1953-54), p. 94.
- (3) Sir Kenneth Clark *A Catalogue of the Drawings of Leonardo da Vinci . . . at Windsor Castle*, Cambridge, 1935, vol. I, p. 67.
- (4) Cf. Ludwig H. Heydenreich "Leonardo da Vinci, Architect of Francis I" in *The Burlington Magazine*, XCIV, 1952, pp. 277-285. In his note 1 on p. 278 Heydenreich states that Leonardo was present as *arrangeur des festes* at the Amboise festival which was held in May 1518 in honor of the marriage of Lorenzo de' Medici and Maddaleno de Tour d'Auvergne. On June 19th the play *Il Paradiso*, which Leonardo had first produced in 1490 at Milan, was again performed at Cloux. Cf. E. Solmi "Documenti inediti sulla dimora di Leonardo da Vinci in Francia nel 1517 e 1518" in *Scritti Vinciani*, Florence, 1924, pp. 358-359. Folio 106 r-a, v-a of the Codex Atlanticus may perhaps be connected with this theatrical device (the upper part of the sheet, r-a, is refolded behind the window, so that it appears as a separate side in the reproduction). This sheet contains sketches in black chalk of a circular platform and the side view of a flight of steps. Its *recto* is taken up with *lunulae*, while the reed pen writing is similar to that on folio 103 recto-b.
- (5) Cf. Codex Atlanticus 70 r-c, coarse paper—sketches of stones cast down into water, notes on the deluge written in reed pen and Melzi-type notes in the upper part of the sheet, after 1516; folio 88 r-a, reed pen on coarse paper, Melzi-type drawing of a young man in profile; folio 90 r-a (dated on the *verso* as July 7th, 1514), *lunulae*, mountain chain in pen



(Fig. 1, 2) Leonardo da Vinci *Codex Atlanticus* 103 recto-b. Notes on geometry, *lunulae*, dated "1517, May, in the Cloux." Details are same size as the dated note and the Windsor fragment replaced in its original hole. This fragment is now in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle (No. 12,470); and it is reproduced by gracious permission of H. M. Queen Elizabeth II.



(Fig. 3) Leonardo da Vinci *Codex Atlanticus*, 277 verso-a. Sketches of caps and notes on painting. Ca. 1510.

per veder il corso del vento infra l'aria e se amlettati retroso
metta bambace ~~amborena~~ in vno canone di l'anna & quella soffia
la Sina pte e il vento soffiato insieme col fumo uscirà dalla
opposita pte cò veri dimostratione delli ambuppamenti et si ricercano
nel moto del vento nella p'dicta aria.

acqua et d'ale come de monti alle lor R adice discende
in ogni grado del suo discesse a p'nta grado de inbultentia
e ci preda di varij saxi et diuersi legnami.

acqua et in q'ra quantita discende ifra l'aria no' sarà co
tutte le parte della sua p'oneccia di equi. moto, in quella
fin di piu tanto discesse et ha piu remota dalla linea centrale
della sua grossezza e quello nasce p' la pte piu remota
del centro e piu vicina col'aria et quella et e vicina
al mezzo et quello si fa piu tenue quasi piu tenue piu si
fa tenue e in meno mo' hangasi del fumo nel moto, no
inuenio a p'nta della acqua.

per veder il corso del vento infra l'aria e se amlettati retroso
metta bambace ~~amborena~~ in vno canone di l'anna & quella soffia
la Sina pte e il vento soffiato insieme col fumo uscirà dalla
opposita pte cò veri dimostratione delli ambuppamenti et si ricercano
nel moto del vento nella p'dicta aria.

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opposita pte cò veri dimostratione delli ambuppamenti et si ricercano
nel moto del vento nella p'dicta aria.

per veder il corso del vento infra l'aria e se amlettati retroso
metta bambace ~~amborena~~ in vno canone di l'anna & quella soffia
la Sina pte e il vento soffiato insieme col fumo uscirà dalla
opposita pte cò veri dimostratione delli ambuppamenti et si ricercano
nel moto del vento nella p'dicta aria.



Fig. 4) Leonardo da Vinci Codex Atlanticus 70 recto-c. Notes on a painting representing the Deluge. Notes on water in upper section by Francesco Melzi, ca. 1517.



progen. d'apogee
l'arbre d'apogee
et les deux autres
sont des arbres

200



5) Leonardo da Vinci Codex Atlanticus 296 recto-a. Studies for a device for a fountain castle of Amboise. Ca. 1517.



Fig. 8 Leonardo da Vinci: Head and shoulders of an old priest. (Original size) Reed pen on coarse paper. Milan, Ambrosiana Library.

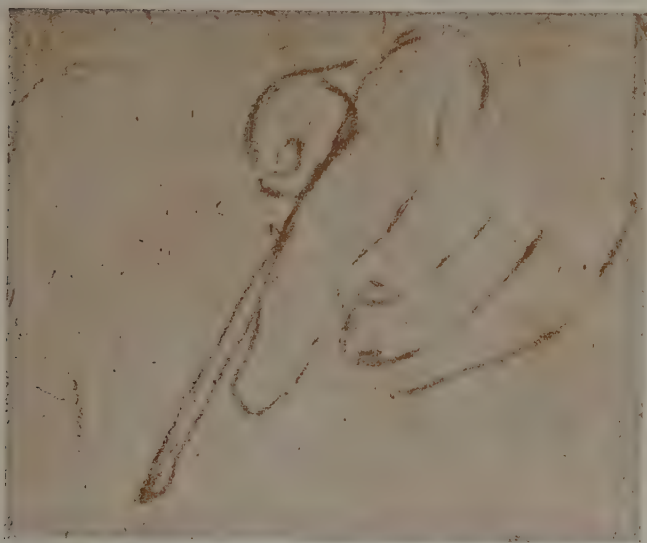


Fig. 9 Francesco Melzi: Leonardo's left hand with reed pen. Drawing in *Codex Atlanticus* 283 v.b. (Original size). Milan, Ambrosiana Library.



(Fig. 10) Leonardo da Vinci: Pointing Lady. Windsor Castle, Royal Library.

and black chalk (only the pen is visible in the reproduction); folio 90 v-b, coarse paper, *lunulae*, sketch of village (perhaps Amboise); folio 91 r-b, coarse paper, *lunulae*, sketch of a man's head; folio 98 r-a, coarse paper, *lunulae*, head of a lion; folio 270 r-a, coarse paper, *lunulae*, profile of a man; folio 279 r-a, coarse paper, *lunulae*, flight of birds, architecture, head of a man, similar to Windsor 12,470.

- (6) Cf. the appendix to my *Studi Vinciani*, vol. XXVII of "Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance," Geneva, 1957, pp. 264-289.
- (7) The use of a very broad pen also occurs about the year 1490, but only in a few writings and drawings, which can easily be dated. Cf. for example folios 148 r-a, r-b, and 319 r-a of the Codex Atlanticus. Cf. also my Phaidon catalogue pl. 13.
- (8) Cf. G. Galbiati *Dizionario leonardesco*, Milan, 1939, p. 159.
- (9) See reproduction in *The Burlington Magazine*, loc. cit., fig. 8.
- (10) *Disegni di Leonardo da Vinci incisi e pubblicati da Carlo Giuseppe Gerli*, Milan, 1784, pl. 5, no. 7. Dated as before 1500 in *Commissione Vinciana*, pl. CCXII, 8.
- (11) This drawing was first annotated by Emil Möller "Wie sah Leonardo aus?" in *Belvedere*, Vienna, 1926, pp. 29-46.
- (12) L. Pastor *Die Reise des Cardinals Luigi d'Aragona*, Freiburg, 1905, p. 143.
- (13) Gerolamo Calvi, *I manoscritti di Leonardo da Vinci dal punto di vista cronologico, storico e biografico*, Bologna, 1925, pp. 254 and ff.
- (14) Cf. *The Burlington Magazine*, loc. cit., fig. 3.
- (15) Codex Atlanticus 29 v-a.

Trends

THE SICILIAN REGIONAL ELECTION OF 1959

The single most important result of the election on June 7, 1959 for the purpose of choosing 90 deputies to the Sicilian regional parliament was the relative success of a new regional Catholic political party, the Sicilian Christian Social Union. In the autumn of 1958 a splinter group of Christian Democrats who were irked by a series of clashes with the national and regional leadership of their party helped to overthrow the Christian Democratic dominated regional government. Their leader, Silvio Milazzo, formerly considered a protege of Don Luigi Sturzo, formed a new government supported by the strange combination of Communist, Socialist, Monarchist and neo-Fascist parties. The issues which led to the split presumably revolved around the historic regional demand for more "autonomy" from Rome and an end to *immobilismo* in regional government. The danger to the Christian Democratic party was not merely the indirect entry of the Communist party into an important governmental body of Italy; even more important was the threat involved in a successful challenge to the central control apparatus of Italy's dominant party (the DC *partitocrazia*), vis-a-vis the regional and provincial party organizations. Most important was the implied threat to the national unity of a party beset by internal contradictions and warring factions, several of which might be encouraged by the relative success of a local split to extend the divisive process to the mainland.

Since the end of the Second World War the Roman Catholic Church in Italy has progressively thrown its weight

more and more openly behind the Christian Democratic party, identifying the maintenance of its temporal position in Italy with the political success of that party. In July, 1949 Marxists were excommunicated and Marxist parties proscribed; however, there remained numerous non-Marxist parties among which the Italian voter could choose. Then on May 3, 1958, prior to the national election of May 25, 1958, the Italian Episcopal Conference had issued a "sacred notice" calling on all Italians to "vote united" for the Christian Democratic party. And in April, 1959 the Vatican had issued an injunction declaring it a sin to vote for or support any party which "directly or indirectly" might aid communism. It was left to the Bishops to apply the papal generalities to specific parties and movements at the proper times and the proper places.

In the spring of 1959 three elections of more than purely local importance tested the political effectiveness of the latest papal injunction. In all three the injunction failed. In the Val d'Aosta a regional election saw the victory of a Popular Front coalition (Communist, Socialist, Union Valdotaïne, dissident Social Democrat) over a Christian Democrat led coalition. In the election for a new provincial government for the province of Ravenna a Communist-Socialist coalition received over fifty percent of the votes. But the election of nine deputies of the Sicilian Christian Social Union to the Sicilian regional assembly is the worst blow because this party claimed to be a Catholic party appealing to the Catholic faithful over the open condemnation and disavowal of Ernesto Cardinal Ruffini, Archbishop of Palermo and primate of Sicily. While voters for the S.C.S.U. were not formally threatened with excommunication, the threat was loosely and informally thrown around by Christian Democratic campaigners at election rallies and in private. (Leopoldo Piccardi, "Il vento del Sud," *Il Mondo*, June 23, 1959, pp. 3-4. Religious pressures were not the only ones exerted, for Christian Democrats threatened more or less openly that Sicily might find economic aid from Rome cut back or cut off unless they received a favorable vote.)

The table below shows the election results in terms of seats won in 1959 in comparison with seats won in the previous regional election of 1955.

	1955	1959
Christian Democratic party	37 seats	34 seats
Communist party	20 seats	21 seats
Socialist party	10 seats	11 seats
Sicilian Christian Social Union	— seats	9 seats
Italian Social Movement (neo-Fascist)	9 seats	9 seats
Italian Democratic Party (Monarchist)	9 seats	3 seats
Liberal party	3 seats	2 seats
Social Democratic party	<u>2 seats</u>	<u>1 seat</u>
	90 seats	90 seats

(*New York Times*, June 9, 1959. The two Monarchist parties had reunited in early 1959 after a split of several years. In reuniting they adopted a new title in which the word "Monarchist" was dropped.)

The extent and nature of the losses suffered by the Christian Democratic party have been minimized and misinterpreted by the American press. It has been pointed out that the DC actually increased its percentage of the total popular vote from 38.6% in 1955 to 38.8% in 1959. (*New York Times*, June 9, 1959). What was not mentioned is the fact that in the 1958 national election the DC party received 42.9% of the votes in Sicily and that the island was one of the regions in which the DC had made its greatest gains. A drop of 4.1% of the total vote in one year is a significant drop. Furthermore it marks the first reversal of the trend towards the DC party which had been growing in Sicily and the South in general ever since the end of the war. It can always be pointed out that a regional election is not directly comparable with a national election. In Italy, however, the same themes and appeals are made by all parties at all levels of election. Local issues and personalities are likely to be as important in a general election as in a purely local one, and in this regional election Cardinal Ruffini made it clear beyond a shadow of a doubt that not only a national issue but a fundamental question of the obedi-

ence of the faithful to the guiding magistracy of the Church was at stake. Nevertheless there is always the question of the discipline of the clergy, and it is possible that the Cardinal's drive was not reflected in the behavior of all Sicilian bishops and priests. Some of them may have quietly and indirectly encouraged the faithful to vote for Milazzo so as to spite the Cardinal, a northerner.

The seats won by the S.C.S.U. obviously came from a number of sources, not only the DC party. The Monarchists were the big losers and undoubtedly many of their voters must have switched to the Milazzo group. It would be an oversimplification, however, to assume that the nine seats won by the S.C.S.U. came directly from the six lost by the Monarchists and the three lost by the Christian Democrats. In many cases Monarchist and Liberal voters may well have switched to the Christian Democrats to compensate partially for the defections from the DC not only to the S.C.S.U. but also to the left parties. And it is probable that some of the sub-proletariat vote which the Monarchists received in the past went directly to the left parties.

The results of the regional election differ somewhat from the trend evidenced by Sicilian votes in the general election of the previous year. The Christian Democrats had shown a very big gain in the 1958 general election over the 1953 election. The Communist vote in 1958 had remained more or less static in terms of percentage of the total vote cast; in 1959 it rose again. The neo-Fascists had suffered heavy losses in 1958; in 1959 they held their own. The Social Democrats had gained slightly in 1958; in 1959 they lost votes. The Liberals gained votes in Sicily in 1958 and lost them in 1959. For the other parties the 1959 election confirmed the trend of the previous year. The Socialists continued to gain. (The Socialists in Sicily ran a completely independent campaign from the Communists in 1959, thereby gaining the support of the very small Radical and Republican parties as well as of dissident Social Democrats.) The Monarchists continued to lose.

The S.C.S.U. split was not primarily an ideological revolt. It could not be termed either a left-wing or right-wing

revolt within the Christian Democratic party. During the months prior to the election when Milazzo governed Sicily in that strange coalition described earlier, he developed no new effective progressive policies or programs. Upon what basis did he get the support of the Socialist and Communist parties? (It is assumed that the Monarchists and Fascists are always available to anyone who wants their help, at a price which need not be too high.) The simplest answer can be summed up in that good old word *trasformismo*. A chance to get into the regional government with the positions and patronage that become available, as well as breaking, at least temporarily, the DC control over the same sources of strength, is perhaps the best explanation. Even the presence of Fascists can be swallowed. A more complicated rationale for the Communists involves a basic shift in strategy. It involves the abandonment of the Gramscian policy of an alliance between northern workers and southern peasants for an alliance of the southern sub-proletariat and the regional bourgeoisie against the national (northern) bourgeoisie. (Marco Cesarini Sforza, "L'esperimento Milazzo," *Nord e Sud*, May, 1959, pp. 25-39.) In actuality this is nothing new in international Communist strategy. Since the early 1920's the Soviet Communist party followed a similar line in the colonial world. It is easy enough to present Sicily as a colony of northern Italian capitalism. The wider significance may be the adoption of this same strategy in continental Italy.

Another question which involves possible national significance is the reason for the DC failure. The easiest explanation is usually organizational. Somewhere along the line the machine broke down. Since it is the Civic Committees of Catholic Action which make up the electoral machine to a great extent, it is not surprising that this is the first place that was examined. Shortly after the election the Vatican announced that Prof. Luigi Gedda was being replaced by Prof. Agostino Maltarello as president of Italian Catholic Action. Gedda was reassigned to his old post of National Chairman of the Civic Committees which he had created and developed, and Ing. Ugo Sciascia, the then chairman,

was relieved of his duties. If the Civic Committees were not functioning properly in Sicily does this indicate a possible malfunctioning throughout Italy? If so, why?

Organizational explanations may be insufficient. There may be limits to the ability of the Church to influence Italian political affairs, and attempts to go beyond those limits are likely to boomerang. Such limits are difficult to define; they are subjective at best and much may depend on the crudity or suavity with which they are challenged.

The election results left open the possibility of a number of different coalitions. A reunification of the DC and the S.C.S.U. would be just three votes short of the necessary majority (45) required to form a regional government. The Monarchists or the Liberals and Social Democrats could supply them. A center-right coalition similar to the one supporting the *monocolore* (one-party) national government in Rome (Christian Democrat, Liberal, Monarchist, Fascist) would provide a majority with votes to spare. A Christian Democrat, S.C.S.U. and Socialist coalition would do the trick. This would reflect that long discussed but never realized national phenomenon, the "opening to the left." Milazzo could reconstruct his previous left-right coalition or could create a government based on S.C.S.U., Communist and Socialist votes. The latter would require some scattered votes or abstentions from other political sectors.

The Vatican, through editorials in the *L'Osservatore romano*, intervened in the maneuvering connected with the election of a new regional government, calling first upon the Catholic parties to reunite and then warning against any collaboration between Catholics and Communists. (*New York Times*, July 21-22, 1959). Attempts at reunification failed and the Christian Democrats, under the sponsorship of the national party, then made agreements with the parties of the right to construct a governmental coalition similar to the one functioning in Rome. This failed because of individual defections, presumably of left wing Christian Democrats or some Monarchists. On July 28, Milazzo was reelected president of the regional government with the votes of his own S.C.S.U., the Communists, the

Socialists, and some defectors. The voting is secret and the political reporters presumed that the defectors came from among the Christian Democrats and other parties of the right. (*New York Times*, July 22, 29, 1959.)

The new Milazzo government can now be classified formally as a center-left government, which was not the case before. It is most unlikely that any serious left-wing policies will be initiated, however; first of all because the left parties will not insist upon them, realizing the fragility of a coalition that can be overthrown at any time by the loss of support from the defectors, secondly because the national government, in spite of regional autonomy, can block any policy it wishes through the instrumentality of its prefects in the Sicilian provinces.

This sequence of events seems obviously of some consequence to national politics. As stated above, the prestige of the Vatican has been shaken. Two open interventions in Sicily, in the election campaign and in the politicking for the election of a regional president by the Assembly, met with rebuff. And Sicily, after all, is not an historic stronghold of anticlericalism; it is not the Romagna.

The Christian Democratic party nationally has been shaken, to some degree. This is the second regional government it has lost in 1959. It still controls the remaining two in Sardinia and Trentino-Alto Adige. The national center-right formula is being openly challenged by the left-wing within the party and a test of strength is likely to come at the national party Congress this fall (see *Items*); for the left-wing considers the present formula a betrayal of DeGasperi's definition of the party as a "center party moving to the left." The Vatican and Christian Democratic leaders have always put party unity above all else and sensitivity to this necessity has up to now kept factionalism within bounds. But the splitting process has begun in Sicily; it could extend to the mainland. It need not necessarily be a clear cut policy split, based on divergences between left and right. It could easily be more of a breakdown of centralized hierarchical party controls, with a return to an earlier pattern of Italian politics, based on local, pro-

vincial, and interest group organizations centered on leading personalities maneuvering their own clienteles. Something of this earlier pattern persists today in spite of the development of the *partitocrazia*.

The pressures working against splitting are very strong, however. The traditional interests of the Church and of large economic groups would be endangered. Communism in Italy has survived, at least in terms of voting strength, all the blows it suffered from the Hungarian invasion and other international crises. In fact it continues to pick up votes and did so in numerous southern local elections held in the spring of 1959, sometimes at the expense of the Socialists. (See the editorial in *Nord e Sud*, July, 1959, p.4. The editor ascribes this Communist revival to the "opening to the right" of Christian Democracy.) But the Christian Democrats gained even more than the Communists in these local elections. Their gains came, however, from the right and they are the major but not sole beneficiary of the crumbling of the Monarchist party in the south, a process which began in the 1958 general election. A successful party that can win elections and gain offices and the perquisites thereof is not likely to split, no matter what differences of policy there may be.

It should not be concluded that the influx of monarchist voters will necessarily weaken the internal position of center-left groups within the Christian Democratic party. Large numbers of ex-monarchist voters come from the southern sub-proletariat, not necessarily conservative in orientation. They can be a base for left-wing Christian Democratic politicians as much as right-wing Christian Democratic politicians. The Sicilian elections demonstrated this characteristic of the monarchist vote, and it could be repeated on the continent.

NORMAN KOGAN

Books

ITALIAN SHORT STORIES

After its painting and its music, Italy's principal contribution to western culture can perhaps be said to be the short story. Not only was the form as we know it created there, but Italian examples have been — to paraphrase Falstaff — the cause of narrative art in other men, including Chaucer, Shakespeare, Keats, and Poe, to select at random only a few of the writers who have read, studied, and used the Italian short story.

Professor Pasinetti has brought together in volume form (*Great Italian Short Stories, selected and edited by P. M. Pasinetti*, Dell, New York, 1959), a selection admirably designed to show how and why the Italian short story has achieved its reputation as a source of perpetual delight for the general reader and a gold-mine of methods and materials for other writers. The result is a collection of stories widely varied in type and treatment, but always readable. The translations by divers hands — but more often by Lowry Nelson, Jr. — are consistently successful in capturing accurately but without awkward self-consciousness the stylistic character and tone of the originals.

The present collection makes it clear that the reputation of the Italian short story rests on the fact that it represents, with few exceptions, narrative art at its best. The majority of the stories here are not those static "slices of life" or "segments of the human scene" that too often pass for short stories in contemporary journals. Rather, they are just plain good stories that observe the facts of human behavior, report them without undue generalization, and arrange them with some attention to arousing our curiosity, sustaining our interest, and leaving us at the end completely satisfied. If a moral is to be drawn from the story, the writer — in most cases — lets us draw it from the facts that he has selected and presented. Above all, he is apparently more concerned with recording the activities of others than with analyzing himself.

These qualities of superb narrative art are most apparent in the very earliest stories in the collection — in the anonymous *St. Francis Converts the Wolf* from the fourteenth century, for example, and obviously in the selections from Boccaccio, Bandello, Cintio, and Machiavelli. Here are exemplified those virtues which

Professor Pasinetti claims for the Italian *novella* at its best: "the classic Italian short story is episodic, anecdotal. Historical or not, its overt assumption is that the author comes up with a worthy piece of news about an actual, and memorable event." He might have added that the episodes and anecdotes are also carefully selected and arranged by the writers so that what may appear on the surface to be history casually related is in reality narrative art that contains suspense, climax, and swift resolution.

The same qualities reappear some three centuries later in the contemporary Moravia, represented here by his technically perfect *Bitter Honeymoon*, and in the selections from Elio Vittorini's *Stories from an Autobiography in Time of War*. Like their earlier counterparts, these are essentially *novelle* — the seemingly cold and objective reporting of news into which the reporter does not openly intrude himself. But as in the earlier stories, the artist-reporter is always at work, selecting and arranging his materials in order to communicate that sharp and realistic perception of human behavior which is the main business of literature.

Professor Pasinetti's collection makes it clear, however, that something went wrong with the Italian narrative gift between the Renaissance and the twentieth century. Only Gaspare Gozzi is here to represent the short story in the period from 1632 (the death of Basile) to 1840 (the birth of Verga). Professor Pasinetti suggests a reason for this three-century dearth when he observes that "With the rise of journalism after the Renaissance and Baroque ages, at least the most immediately anecdotal quality of Italian narrative finds its outlet in reportage." If so, I would conclude that journalism's gain was the short story's loss.

Particularly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the Italian short story, like its counterpart in other languages, tended to become more personal essay and less narrative art. The writer tells us brilliantly and at length how he feels and what he thinks, but he tells us these things directly, rather than indirectly through the artistic selection and arrangement of narrative details that are allowed to speak for themselves. Witness, for example, Svevo's *This Indolence of Mine*, which seems less a short story than a fascinating essay on gerontology; or Pirandello's *A Character in Distress*, where the main value is not narrative, but rather the important understanding that we get of the ideas and theories of a great dramatic writer. Such pieces are undeniably first-rate examples of literary art, but they represent the art of the sensitive essayist and not the art of the teller of tales.

One senses a return to the great tradition of Italian story telling, with its canny perceptions and its seemingly-detached reporting, in Verga's *The She Wolf*, and subsequently in the stories of Moravia

and Vittorini. In the medium of the motion picture, De Sica perhaps represents a similar return in the twentieth century to that combination of objective reporting and artistic selection which is the essence of the Italian short story. In any event, Professor Pasinetti's anthology provides a judicious and stylistically attractive selection of short stories which demonstrate that the tradition of the Italian *novella*, despite a period of partial eclipse, is as vigorous as ever.

[James E. Phillips]

DA PONTE MEMOIRS

Da Ponte's *Memoirs* (*Memoirs of Lorenzo Da Ponte*; New York: Orion Press) first appeared in English in 1929, many years after they had already been translated into French and German. In 1929 two separate English translations went to press, one by the Englishman L. A. Sheppard (London: Routledge) and one by the American Elizabeth Abbott (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co.) which is reprinted here.

As secretary to Arthur Livingston, Professor of Romance Languages at Columbia University, Elizabeth Abbott was in close contact with the institution that gave Da Ponte his chief claim to local fame. For in 1825 he had been named Professor of Italian at Columbia. In that same year Harvard, too, inaugurated a chair in Italian. Da Ponte thus became one of the first two professors of Italian in the United States. His career at Columbia, however, turned out to be short-lived and inauspicious: not a single student registered for his courses. Yet for twenty years before that Da Ponte had been engaged in instructing hundreds of young ladies and gentlemen from New York's best families in "the beauties of the Italian language," and he was to continue to do so until his death in 1838 at the venerable age of 89. The pages of the *Memoirs* that tell of this experience make entertaining reading for anyone who has followed in Da Ponte's footsteps. His complaints have a familiar ring, and his efforts to create and sustain enthusiasm through dramatic readings, poetry recitations, the award of prizes, and even the establishment of a boarding house for his out-of-town students, indicate the inevitable constants in the career of the foreign language teacher.

But it was not only in his teaching, which maintained to such a large extent the attitudes and the duties of the family tutor, that Da Ponte lived the transition years between the Old Regime and the new. Indeed the *Memoirs* have always been deemed valuable especially as a document of their times. The adventurous life they recount is a familiar one. No less so is their protagonist. For

here we have not merely one Lorenzo Da Ponte, ex-Jew from Ceneda (now Vittorio Veneto), ordained priest, exile, court poet to Joseph II, friend of Casanova, Italian bookseller in New York, respectable husband and father, but a story common in its variegated aspects to many a Venetian in the last years of the Republic. Da Ponte's *Memoirs* occupy a place beside Casanova's, Gozzi's, Goldoni's, and beside Nievo's historical novel, *The Castle of Fratta*. They mirror a time in which it was amazingly easy for a small elite to step over barriers of nationality, religion, and social class, to trust to luck, rely on talent, and thus to make their way from one European capital to another — not forgetting the possibility of excursions into the New World as well.

Unfortunately Da Ponte is not aware of the larger role he is playing. The breadth of the historian is not his, nor is the insight of the moralist. Though echoes of the momentous events of his day occasionally trickle in — as, for instance, the customary reference to Napoleon's conquest of Venetia and to deplorable conditions in the once proud Queen of the Adriatic — Da Ponte's horizon is remarkably limited. From the *Memoirs* there emerges the portrait of a petty man, capable of harboring smoldering resentments and remembering small monetary details for long years. It may seem an irony of fate that a man who had lived eleven intrigue-and-success-filled years at the court in Vienna should turn grocer in New York and general storekeeper in Sunbury, Pa., but Da Ponte took both roles in his stride. It is a pity that that stride was frequently all too pedestrian.

Yet for all their author's crass egocentricity, the *Memoirs* make interesting reading. This is especially true for present-day Americans, intent as never before on discovering their past. Da Ponte's *Memoirs* grew out of an autobiographical sketch written in 1807, the year that he met Clement Moore, who, by introducing him to the cream of New York society, gave him an audience for his efforts on behalf of Italian culture. The *Memoirs* had an apologetic but also a didactic purpose. They were used by Da Ponte as a text book. He found his own prose, straightforward and modern, a better instrument for teaching than the classics of the past. That he should choose his own life as subject for that prose is all to the good. He left to posterity an early account of the European intellectual's odyssey in the New World.

Thus it is that while Da Ponte's *Memoirs* have up to now been studied almost exclusively for the light they throw on musical life in Vienna (after all, Da Ponte enjoys a kind of reflected immortality for having been the author of the libretti for *Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*), the present edition invites a larger public to sample them. For this reason Professor Livingston's notes have been reduced to a minimum and relegated to an appendix, Professor

Bergin of Yale has added an engaging preface, and Livingston's sparkling introduction to the 1929 edition has been somewhat pared down. Typographically the volume is most handsome: the large inner margins are restful for the eye, the illustrations of good quality. The white, yellow, and gold rococo binding adds a touch of frivolity perfectly suited to an eighteenth-century chronicle. In their present dress Da Ponte's *Memoirs* could well appear under the tinsel of gift wrapping. They would disappoint neither the layman nor the connoisseur.

[Olga Ragusa]

ITALIAN FAIRYLAND

The reader who is already acquainted with Italo Calvino's vast and luxurious edition of *Fiabe italiane*, which was published in 1956 by Einaudi in the *Millenni* series, will not be surprised that within three years someone thought of making an English version of it. The reader should be told at once, however, that *Italian Fables*, translated from Calvino's collection by Louis Brigante, (New York, *The Orion Press*, 1959), contains only 53 of the 200 presented in the Italian original. (It is regrettable that nowhere in the Preface, or even on the inside flap of the dust jacket, is the reader told that this is a partial and not a complete translation of the whole collection.) This is certainly a welcome and interesting selection of Italian fables; however it is not true, as it is claimed, that this is "the first representative collection of Italian tales to be published in English." Although it is true that the handful of Italian tales we find in such general works as F. H. Lee, *Folk Tales of All Nations* (Tudor, 1930. Eleven tales), and Milton Rugoff, *A Harvest of World Folk Tales* (Viking, 1949. Seven tales) are hardly representative, what might be called an effort to give the English reader a sampling of Italian fables was made recently by M. A. Jagendorf in his *The Priceless Cats and Other Italian Stories* (Vanguard Press, 1955) which contains 23 stories, and by the late Domenico Vittorini in his *Old Italian Tales* (David McKay, 1958) which offers 20 stories (some of the latter's, such as "Saint Francis and the Wolf," "The One-Legged Crane," and "The Three Rings," are hardly folk tales, however). A special place, in this type of collection, belongs to a little book which over thirty years ago was prepared for the second, or even first year student of Italian by F. A. G. Cowper: *Italian Folk Tales and Folk Songs* (Heath, 1923), whose 15 tales are true fables.

A fully representative collection of Italian fables did exist already, however, and it was edited, with scholarly notes, by T. F. Crane (the same Crane of that invaluable work, *Italian Social Customs of the Renaissance*) as far back as 1885: *Italian Popular*

Tales (Houghton, Mifflin and Co.), which includes no fewer than 109 tales — in sheer numbers, then, twice as representative as the one under consideration. Crane used the key collections then available to him, and made an excellent translation of the ones he selected.

It is well known that the vogue of collecting and studying popular tales — the stories, that is, which were handed down by word of mouth from one generation to the next of the, often, illiterate people — was started by the collection of German folk tales published at the beginning of the last century by the Grimm brothers. In Italy, where folk tales had already interested such well-known writers of *novelle* as G. Straparola in the 16th century (22 of the 74 stories in his *Piacevoli notti* are of the *märchen* type), and in the following century G. B. Basile, whose *Pentameron* anticipated Charles Perrault's collection of tales by over half a century, no attempt at a scientific collection of tales was made until 1869, when Angelo De Gubernatis published his *Novelline di Santo Stefano*. This started an avalanche of collections in all corners of the new Italy — now that there was a national consciousness it was only appropriate that Italians study their rich folklore — which culminated with the most systematic and monumental of them all, Giuseppe Pitrè's *Fiabe, novelle, e racconti popolari siciliani*. But until recently, although Italy had numerous collections of regional fables — many of them still available only in the dialect of the informant — she had no single collection representative of all her regions. This is what Italo Calvino has done — fulfilling the dream of Domenico Comparetti, who started on this path in 1875 with his *Novelle popolari italiane*. Calvino has made a thorough investigation of the rich and varied fable lore of his country, and he has chosen 200 of the most representative tales, including all the "types" of folk tales that are to be found in Italy. Further, since most stories are told in one form or another, with only a few variations, all over Italy, for each story he has chosen the most colorful variant, and has listed it under the name of the region (following a linguistic rather than a political-geographic arrangement) where that variant was recorded. As for the distribution of the tales, Calvino's collection begins with the variants recorded in northern Italy, proceeds to central and southern Italy, and concludes with various fables from Sicily, Sardinia, and also Corsica.

As one would expect, Calvino's stories do not differ materially from those of the rest of Europe: one finds ghost stories, fairy tales, moral stories, adventure stories, animal tales, and also gossip tales and jests. A characteristic of Italian fables seems to be a scarcity, if not a lack, of heroism and chivalry, of horror stories, of frightening monsters, and of devils. The language of Italian

tales is simple, direct, and often picturesque. In Calvino's collection at times one detects the hand of Calvino himself — one of Italy's young writers, known in the United States for his novel *The Baron in the Trees* — and in this connection we must remember that not only has he transcribed the various tales from the original dialect into Italian, but he has also "edited" them, some more than others. In other words, Calvino, at the risk of being criticized by professional folklorists, has followed the path indicated by the Grimm brothers, who did not hesitate to embellish the often crude style of the story teller or of the recorded version.

Calvino's original collection is preceded by a lengthy, explanatory and illustrative introduction, and is followed by notes for each story, which indicate that Calvino has worked on material already available in books, journals, or in MSS. at museums and libraries. Calvino has done no field collecting, but he has expressed the hope that his book will lead others to carry out that most important work in order to fill some existing lacunae in various regional collections. The handsome volume of *Fiabe italiane* is illustrated with numerous full color reproductions of the 15th century illuminations of a medieval collection of fables (mostly animal fables).

The English translation of the 53 fables selected from the original 200 is excellent. It certainly is "una traduzione indovinata." Undoubtedly, many readers will wish that Louis Brigante had decided to translate the rest of the tales. The Preface, which is signed by Italo Calvino, is only three pages long, but adequate for its purpose. In this presentation of some of the more characteristic Italian tales, a full translation of the lengthy Italian introduction would have been out of place. Likewise, the translator used good judgment in excluding a translation of the notes. As for the illustrations, instead of reproducing the expensive plates of the Italian edition, a charming series of black and white sketches was made by Michael Train; I wonder whether the latter — since, after all, fables are aimed especially at children — are not more appropriate than the colorful "bestiary" of the Italian edition.

[C. S.]

THE FORGOTTEN PRINCES

The reissue of Harold Acton's *Last Medici* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1958) brings to hand more readily a book which many have for years intended to read and which a few persons have treasured as a minor and private work of art, infinitely quotable and full of rare and curious information about the princes of the Medici twilight. The figures of a dynasty in decline seem often to have an attraction lacking in their great forebears. There

is more to be found out about them, and they have had the leisure to become interesting privately. This family, particularly, decaying in the awareness of its slow progress toward extinction and pushed fitfully into the counter-theme of a struggle to achieve, before the end, recognition of its royal status, presents a highly interesting, if not intriguing, subject.

After the illustrious elder branch passed out of history the personalities of the younger faded quickly into the shadow. The names of its later princes are remembered as they figure in the genealogical tables of other families, or because of the promise hinted occasionally in the crazed emptiness of some bust or portrait. They never made history, nor did they ever quite attain—despite glorious origins, extravagance of piety and debauchery, and the gift of two queens to France—acceptance as a royal family. Centuries later a Mme de Villeparisis would find questionable the House of France, itself, because of its lack of quarterings, due to that far-off “low marriage” with Marie de Medicis.

The worthy subject of Mr. Acton's book is the world of those void-eyed grand dukes, recalled, if at all, in marble, and of their eccentric and sometimes brilliant deportment through the long sullen lethargy in which they watched the tree dying. The author's erudition is remarkable, and it is questionable if anyone ever knew so much about these persons or has read so many diaries and letters. Indeed the anecdotes, marvellously picturesque in their description of necrophiliac cardinals and melancholic princes and of the doxies and clerics who surround them, are so many and succeed each other so rapidly, that the work seems not infrequently on the periphery of being an exquisite and learned joke-book. This is not to say that Mr. Acton's attitude is facetious; it is really only in the brief and chattily dogmatic disquisitions on politics and literature which surround the bizarre pictures that an attitude is discernible, and then it is only occasionally condescending, lost in the stately monotony of tone which, in its not inelegant dryness, ever suggests the dust of the tombs into which the princes go.

If the wild and staring faces of the portraits attain only partial personality and the names on the family tree fail to take on full connotations, it is perhaps that the passivity of their decadence paralysed them in life as their images in these pages seem paralysed. And it is not fair to feel that in the next entry in the diary, in another postscript, there lay the significant personal fact that would give the essence and make the individual alive. For it is neither the intention nor the virtue of the book to deal in human portraiture. This is a stylised and splendidly decorative tableau in which the death masks are taken down and carried through a pantomime of the events among which the last Medici moved.

[Stanford Drew]

THE "OFFICIAL" RENAISSANCE

Baldesar Castiglione's *The Courtier*, now available in a new translation by Charles S. Singleton (Garden City: Anchor Books), was one of the favorite books of the English Renaissance. Until the eighteenth century it was known in England chiefly through the vernacular translation of Thomas Hoby (1561) and the Latin version of Bartholomew Clerke (1571). In one language or another it has been issued in at least one hundred and fifty editions since its publication in 1528. Clearly its historical importance, not only for Italian letters but for European as well, is such as to command our attention on the occasion of its new appearance in English.

Although it quite transcends the classification, *The Courtier* is usually labeled a "courtesy book." Under that inadequate designation it is the habit to lump together Sir Thomas Elyot's *The Governor*, Della Casa's *Galateo*, Henry Peacham's *The Compleat Gentleman*, and Milton's *Letter on Education*, to mention only the best. Rather than to imaginative literature, they belong to the history of morals, or more specifically, to the history of education and sociology. But they are instructive to the historian of literature. In their concern for shaping the whole man they have traditionally been considered typical of the Renaissance. Indeed, it occurs to ask, where else one may find such explicit accounts of the ideal man? To some extent, of course, in the moral essays of Seneca and Plutarch and in the figure of the ideal orator of Cicero and Quintilian. But here in Castiglione we encounter perhaps for the first time a recognition that it is possible for a man to achieve, outside religious or philosophical creeds and outside heroic codes, a certain perfection in living. That perfection consists not in the cultivation of some single virtue or faculty but rather in the cultivation, short of "professionalism," of many. In the notion of *sprezzatura* (which Professor Singleton, following L. E. Opdycke, renders "nonchalance") we may see a reflection of Horace's ideal of moderation (*mediocritas*); yet Horace's easygoing charm and his desire to keep out of harm's way would only barely foreshadow the aristocratic qualities demanded of the courtier. If one were to seek pervasive moral influences on Castiglione they would rather be found in Aristotle's ethics of the mean and in Plato's equation of knowledge and virtue. Overt Christianity hardly enters the discussion: toward the very end of the book it is brought in by an implied identification of Socrates's "love" as found in the *Symposium* and the Christian notion of God as "love." Paganism and Christianity are perhaps harmonized, but, to put the matter crudely, the courtier has supplanted the saint as ideal.

Is it justifiable to call *The Courtier* imaginative literature? Its most pervasive literary influence, both in language and

structure, is of course the *Decameron*. Yet its didactic tone and purpose consistently minimize the fiction: only rarely do the speakers indulge in anecdote and narration (usually borrowed from the ancient memorialists) and only sketchily are they characterized. There is in the whole situation that Castiglione evokes (evening entertainments at the court of Urbino) something of the forced conviviality of retainers bidden to be at ease by their masters. Both the interlocutors and the reader feel quite stiff and uncomfortable in the presence of the synthetic ideal. Point of view in the narrative offers no mitigation, since it is in effect a literal endorsement of everything presented. Still, the refinement of manners, the ease and eloquence of the characters, the formal informality represent, at least fictionally, the highest point of sophistication reached by the Renaissance. Perhaps it is churlish to suggest that too much of human nature is left out of account and that the ideal, stripped of accident and irrationality, is a bore. Very little is done to characterize the interlocutors: they all speak in the same graceful "aulic" style and they all generally behave with complete decorum. In the third book Castiglione does inject a bit of dramatic tension with the debate between the Magnifico and Gasparo concerning the status and character of women. Thereafter Gasparo, who allows himself to be cast as the devil's advocate, becomes a tic character whose not very misogynous utterances are occasionally allowed to stir the placid surface. It should, however, be acknowledged that the tranquility of the charmed circle in which the action takes place is achieved in some small measure by a contrast with the tumultuous imperfect world without. Castiglione makes clear that he is recreating a lost world; though it points ahead to the achieving of an ideal, *The Courtier* is in part a praise of past time. Perhaps there is a latent paradox here; perhaps those who discoursed on the ideal courtier are meant to be seen as ideal courtiers themselves. If there is a hint of such richness, not much is made of it.

In some meaningful sense we may call *The Courtier* the "official" book of the Renaissance. In it we find constant echoes of Antiquity, the highly moral Antiquity that could somehow be reconciled with Christianity; we find all the main set topics of the time: the debate between court and province, arms and letters, the question of the position of women (a critique of both the Juvenalian view and the canons of courtly love), the question of beauty and virtue versus ugliness and vice (resolved in the usual simplest fashion), and the subject of friendship — all themes to be further echoed in Guevara, Lyly, Spenser and many others. The manner in which they are treated in Castiglione, divorced as they are from, say, Plato's philosophy or from Christian religion, is too pat and too superficial. Bembo's famous speech at the end of *The Courtier* (the *locus classicus* of Renaissance Platonism)

can hardly, despite the fact that it is the set piece of the book, the one purple patch, bear comparison with the profound and philosophically grounded complexity of its model in Socrates's climatic speech toward the end of the *Symposium*. We should, of course, be grateful to have such a set of Renaissance common-places in *The Courtier* and so elaborate an attempt to create an ideal society bent on further projecting its ideal. If we then turn to Machiavelli and Ariosto we are simply seeking moral and artistic profundity.

Hoby's translation may be considered to have aged more than Castiglione's original. Its historical importance in the development of modern literary English, however, may be indicated obliquely by Sir John Cheke's letter to Hoby published in the first edition. "I am of this opinion," he wrote, "that our own tung shold be written cleane and pure, unmixt and unmangeled with borrowing of other tungen, wherin if we take not heed by tijm, ever borowing and never payeng, she shall be fain to keep her house as bankrupt." For Cheke, then, Hoby's version pointed in the right direction; Hoby had taken his cue from Castiglione, who in his Preface defends his departure from *toscanità* in the interest of fashioning a universal contemporary Italian. That was all to the good for English; even though English had not yet reached the elegance of Italian it eventually managed more successfully to avoid artificiality. Leaving out of account two eighteenth-century versions, the next important translation was that of L. E. Opdycke (1903), a careful and scholarly version based on Vittorio Cian's text and furnished with elaborate notes. It is faithful to the text, fairly graceful, but occasionally marred by an archaic or stilted phrase and by loose syntax. Professor Singleton's version, while often inevitably close to Opdycke's in phrasing, is considerably better. His syntactical solutions pay regard to our sense of contemporary English euphony and his English versions of occasional idioms and proverbs are not so much literal as felicitously equivalent. Choosing at random, one may compare the following renditions from Book II, section 1:

Opdycke: "Now the cause of this wrong judgment among old people I for my part take to be, that the fleeting years despoil them of many good things, and among others in great part rob the blood of vital spirits; whence the complexion changes, and those organs become weak through which the soul exerts its powers."

Singleton: "Now for my part, I do believe that the cause of of the mistaken opinion among old people is that the passing years take with them many of the good things of life and, among others, deprive the blood of a great part of the vital spirits; wherefore the constitution is changed, and these organs through which the soul exercises its powers become weak."

In choosing between liberty and literalness the translators differ from point to point; but the upshot is that Professor Singleton's choices are on the whole more faithful and better English. A besetting difficulty in rendering Castiglione is what may seem to us his excessive use of rhetorical conjunctions and adverbs. His sentences characteristically contain subordinate clauses; they are heavily starched with transitional adverbs ("allora," "però," "adunque"). Since he is writing spoken discourse and conversation in the style of argumentative prose, the translator must find it hard to convey an impression of naturalness. Professor Singleton has managed for the most part to control the difficulty by giving his sentences balance and ease. There remains, however, a certain monotony which may be said to derive from the imperfect correspondence of subject matter and style in the original. Castiglione is a victim of his heavily "categorical" and "logical" style.

This version, then, which is based on the most recent and best critical text (that of Bruno Maier), should remain standard in English for a long time to come. As added ornament, to enhance the reader's impression of ideal balance and *mesure*, Edgar Mayhew has selected thirty-two plates illustrating the life and relevant figures of the time. Castiglione has been well served; his "official" book is now properly represented in contemporary English.

[L. N.]

CROTON ELEGIES

Antonio Barolini's first poems (*La gaia gioventù*, 1938) appeared at a moment when the prevalent influence in Italian poetry was that of the so-called "Ermetici." But Barolini did not rally to them: neither his technique nor his inspiration had much in common with theirs. His following books (*Il meraviglioso giardino*, 1942; *Viaggio col veliero San Spiridione*, 1945; *Il veliero sommerso*, 1949) confirmed that he was an unpretentious, unassuming poet who, although well alive to the problems and conflicts of his time, was at his best when singing the beauty of the countryside and expressing his fondness for the lovely trees of his garden: "Sotto questo verde dimentico il mio nome,/non so chi sia, di dove venga o vada./.../Il verde dentro il verde, fresco arco,/sotto l'ansimare delle immense chiome/la memoria si perde." ("Gli alberi del giardino," from *Il meraviglioso giardino*). How refreshing, this simplicity and immediateness of diction, this clear statement of a genuine feeling! The poet who loses his consciousness and forgets himself in a deep communion with nature is a familiar sight in modern Italian poetry (D'Annunzio, *Meriggio*; Montale, *Mediterraneo*): Barolini strikes his own note, and avoiding both D'Annunzio's superhuman exaltation and Montale's philosophical cloudiness, he gives perfect

expression to a rare moment of illumination. His language is so effortless, his rhymes come so naturally to him, that the reader is carried away by a great flow of inspiration, and gladly participates in the poet's happiness. Yes, happiness, because Barolini, even when complaining and lamenting, can never be totally sad and gloomy: he knows a way to sing his sorrows almost merrily, that reminds one of the music of Schubert.

This is exactly how one feels when reading his new *Elegie* (*Elegie di Croton*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 1959.) The expatriate poet (Barolini left Italy and his beloved Vicenza in 1955 and settled at Croton-on-Hudson, N.Y.) has given to his recent poems the romantic and Rilkean title of *Elegie*, but the reader can rest assured that when he opens the book he will neither be confronted with a heap of sorrows nor submerged by a flood of tears. Perhaps *Idylls* would have been a more adequate description. The book in fact contains about fifty poems inspired in Barolini by the Croton landscape and way of life, and one has the impression that the exile has after all been able to adjust himself to his new surroundings and conditions. For a few satirical touches that show an attitude of contempt ("Fastidio delle razze, / confondersi dei sudori, / monotonia degli amori, / Pessimo gusto dell'acqua / in tazze di carta / . . . / Masticatori/di gomma! Sputi/attaccaticci e bugia / delle banali verità . . .": p. 58. "Fanno figli senza testa, / nè sanno / quale sia coscienza festa / la vita . . .": p. 43. "Le ha toccate l'orgoglio, / stupidità organizzata / . . . / catena di vanità / e ipocrisia democratica.": p. 44. "Ogni attimo lavorare. / Un lavoro riposare, / la fatica di procreare / . . . / Non c'è sosta, / manca il tempo, / fiumi, incanti, / firmamento.": p. 56) and a couple of poems that do indulge in homesickness ("Elegia d'Europa," "Musica e ospiti") there is plenty of evidence that Barolini understands and accepts America.

For the first time in history, as Prezzolini remarked in his recent review of these *Elegie*, an Italian poet has something original and important to say about America. Barolini's "illuminations" on this subject are quite striking and memorable: the poet's inspired epigrams may explain the American civilization to the Italian reader much better than many a laborious book of history and sociology. Take this very simple and effective image, for example: "Siamo tutti emigranti, / e la bandiera federale / ci tiene insieme / con striscie rosse / e stelle d'argento." (p. 22) Or these powerful syntheses of condensed thought: ". . . questo paese / di secolare gente provvisoria!" (p.37) "La rivoluzione della steppa / è qui arrivata democratica, / Facendo una strada obliqua, educata, / sembra distratta, ma cammina pratica" (p.40). But the best of all, in this connection, is the beautiful poem "Dono delle figlie alla nuova terra": "Due fanciulle / porto in dono a questi pionieri, / e affido il mio nome di ieri / ai freschi guerrieri di domani" (p.78).

This mature faculty of passing judgment on people and events is a new achievement, but Barolini's lovely old gifts as a singer of trees and nature have not disappeared. In fact they too have matured and reached a deeper intensity. "Il polline," "La casa," "I colori dell'Hudson," "L'erba falciata" belong to the old vein of *Il meraviglioso giardino*. In "La casa" the memory of the lovely trees of Vicenza destroyed by fire ("dilaniati dal fuoco," as a consequence of an air raid) gives a poignant undercurrent of tenderness to the description of the new house of the poet, all surrounded by trees. And the ending of the poem is perhaps the best passage in the whole book: "Così / tra venti opposti / e opposte speranze / e stormire fi fronde / or dilaniate or serene, / dilaniato e sereno / il giorno si consuma." (p.10).

We do not want to detract anything from Barolini in pointing out that these beautiful lines have a precedent in Quasimodo; "E tutto che mi nasce a gioia / dilania il tempo." ("Insonnia," in *Ed è subito sera*). We rather would like to congratulate Barolini for not following the winner of the Nobel Prize on his perilous path of social inspiration, but sticking to his provincial Muse, be it in Vicenza or in Croton. Let him go on writing in this vein, and disprove Quasimodo's proclamation "*that the poet, nowadays, knows that he cannot write any idyll.*" [Filippo Donini]

JAMES IN ITALY

Italian Hours, now issued as an Evergreen Book (New York: Grove Press), was assembled and edited by Henry James in 1909 from the many essays that grew out of his first visit in 1869 and five return visits in the seventies. Two essays describe his early approaches out of France and Switzerland. Five are devoted to Venice, six to Rome, four to Florence, one to Naples and Capri, and others to the small Tuscan cities. James, with Baedeker and Ruskin in hand like any ordinary tourist of the day, "did" Italy, but it is what Italy did to him that gives this collection its interest for his admirers.

His soliloquy in the Boboli Gardens reveals the true role of James in Italy — the self-styled *flâneur*, idling away these Italian hours, is really the passionate Pilgrim, who seeks the past in the sensuous moment:

Chancing on such a cluster of objects in Italy — glancing at them in a certain light and a certain mood — I get (perhaps on too easy terms, you may think) a sense of *history* that takes away my breath. Generations of Medici have stood at these closed windows, embroidered and brocaded according to their period, and held *fêtes champêtres* and floral games on the greensward, beneath the mouldering hemicycle. And the Medici were great people! But what remains of it all now is a mere tone in the air, a faint sigh in the breeze, a vague

expression in things, a passive — or call it rather, perhaps, to be fair, a shyly, pathetically responsive — accessibility to the yearning guess. Call it much or call it little, the ineffaceability of this deep stain of experience, it is the interest of old places and the bribe to the brooding analyst. Time has devoured the doers and their doings, but there still hangs about some effect of their passage. We can “lay out” parks on virgin soil, and cause them to bristle with the most expensive importations, but we unfortunately can’t scatter abroad again this seed of the eventual human soul of a place — that comes but in its time and takes too long to grow. There is nothing like it when it *has* come.

One can imagine Mary McCarthy’s description of the Gardens, if she chose to train her sharp eye to do a real job of the rather seedy scene, as detailed, say, as her treatment of the Pazzi Chapel: James mentions in passing its “shabbiness” but he views the place largely with the inward eye. It is the difference, one might say, between an Impressionist and a Flemish master, or, more to the point, the difference between the sensibility of today and that of 1909, between the subjective and the objective ways of viewing. James, after all, is a contemporary of Ruskin, of Proust and Pater. The reader of today might be disappointed in, or even irritated by, these pieces, if he is not a devotee of James or an historian of art or society interested in changing times and tastes, both because of the reflection in James of contemporary taste (he pays homage to Botticelli, but there is no mention of Piero della Francesca in his description of Arezzo and he seems more interested in the imperial tombs at the mausoleum of Galla Placidia than in the mosaics) and because of his inveterate habit, “cherished beyond any other,” he confesses, “to spin . . . impressions to the last tenuity of fineness.” The early sketches are altogether too sketchy for James himself (re-reading them he complains of their meagerness as if he reproaches himself for not seeing or feeling with sufficient intensity), but doubtless many readers will prefer them to the later ones in which, as in his treatment of stock human situations in his later fiction, the “brooding analyst” strives to express precisely the richness of his reactions to the old familiar places, to verbalize the aura which for him, as “inordinate lover of an enlightened use of our eyes,” they give off.

Yet if in the matter of taste and style these notes might strike us now as dated and unduly precious, it is interesting even to the non-historian to see Italy as it was fifty or seventy-five years ago: James saw the young nation, as he puts it, drawing on its seven-league boots and setting off on the road of Progress, anxious to catch up with its northern neighbors. If James was haunted by a sense of the past, he was hardly less haunted by his vision of the future, and he laments yet acknowledges the advantages of *vaporetti*, trains, and automobiles. One feels that he would want to exterminate all the Vespas, could he revisit the land today.

Supreme esthete as he was, he appreciated quiet as requisite to any other appreciation, and so he resented what he called the "Cockney" assault on his treasure house. In one lightly sardonic passage he plays with the happy thought of turning the Blue Grotto into a literal "tourist trap":

. . . a happy brotherhood of American and German tourists, including, of course, many sisters, scrambled down into little, waiting, rocking tubs and, after a few strokes, popped systematically into the small orifice of the Blue Grotto. There was an appreciable moment when they were all lost to view in that receptacle, the daily "psychological" moment during which it must so often befall the recalcitrant observer on the deserted deck to find himself aware of how delightful it might be if none of them should come out again. The charm, the fascination of the idea is not a little — though also not wholly — in the fact that, as the wave rises over the aperture, there is the most encouraging appearance that they perfectly may not. There it is. There is no more of them. It is a case to which nature has, by the neatest stroke and with the best taste in the world, just quietly attended.

The quiet of Pisa, its "morbid charm," evokes in him a far different mood and produces, rather surprisingly for the reserved James, a romantic vision:

If I were ever to be incurably disappointed in life, if I had lost my health, my money, or my friends, if I were resigned forevermore to pitching my expectations in a minor key, I should go and evoke the Pisan peace. Its quietude would seem something more than a stillness — a hush. Pisa may be a dull place to live in, but it's an ideal place to wait for death.

The old stones and the immemorial landscape are often tinged with melancholy for him: "this note . . . of a myriad old sadnesses in solution in the view of Florence . . . seemed to me now particularly strong. 'Lovely, lovely, but it makes me blue,' the sensitive stranger couldn't but murmur to himself as, in the late afternoon, he looked at the landscape from over one of the low parapets." The "brooding analyst" saw not merely the stones but the sermons in them. Thus he speaks of the little Protestant cemetery close to St. Paul's Gate in Rome. "where the ancient and modern world are insidiously contrasted," where Keats and Shelley lie under the pagan shadow of the hoary pyramid of Caius Cestius: "a wonderful confusion of mortality and a grim enough admonition of our helpless promiscuity in the crucible of time."

It is James himself, rather than Italy, who is on display in these pieces: his sensibility fairly bristles (as he would say) in this most beautiful of all countries. For some, such a cicerone on such an exclusive tour would prove a monumental bore; for others, to float with James down the Grand Canal, to alight at the *palazzo* of Milly Theale, and to ascend, in Jamesian style, "with all the felicities of deliberation," would be indeed a royal progress.

[E. F. Mengel]

INVITATION TO GRAMMAR

Emilio Peruzzi's *Problemi di grammatica italiana* (ed. Radio Italiana, 1959), a series of radio lectures now collected in an attractive small volume, offers us a noteworthy attempt to present and discuss some of the problems of Italian grammar before a large non-specialized public which, however, is too often erroneously considered to be lacking in linguistic curiosity or sensibility. The discussion, ably conducted, flows smoothly in a felicitous alternation of themes, and the reader is not halted by monotony or boredom. A concise "Invitation to grammar" (the term "grammar" here is not to be interpreted as normative) with a skillful accompaniment of historical notes on Italian grammars and dictionaries, is followed by a chapter on the article, in which the style is systematically expository but never abstractly preceptorial. Here and there, observations of a more strictly linguistic nature, always offered with an apt feeling for popularization, follow sections clearly illustrative in purpose. (See "Il latino e il dialetto sardo," pp. 44-45; "L'antica pronuncia latina," pp. 46-47; "I dialetti italiani," pp. 60-69, etc.) This expository order also helps to reveal even to an unprepared reader a wealth of problems and solutions previously unsuspected. Thus the author, by an external device, furnishes evidence of the idea, here and there explicitly mentioned, which underlies the entire book: the fact that in Italian there is no *rule*, and than rather than trying to rest on an absolute norm for which it is vain to search, it is important to form one's personal taste in order to make the best choice among the competing forms or constructions frequently offered us.

The historical conception of a language which is not crystallized but continually evolving makes itself felt at every occasion. Consequently certain living tendencies of the language (e.g. its trend toward "uniform schemes" and the elimination of exceptions—for example the ascendancy of the article *il* over *lo* in cases of wavering usage, or the adoption of the plural *i pigiami* rather than *i pigiama*) are stressed. Throughout the booklet, as well as in the well-chosen chapter titles, emphasis is placed on the struggle of the new with the old; most of the examples given seem valid, for instance the developing prevalence of forms in *-ei* over those in *-etti* in the past absolute of the second conjugation. I do not agree, however, with the author's prophecy that the forms *dessi* and *stessi* will eventually yield to *dassi* and *stassi*: outside of Tuscany the latter are practically unknown. In this context the stylistic possibilities offered by the use of forms felt to be archaic (cf. the quotation from Palazzeschi on p. 84) are not neglected.

It is not inappropriate to mention here the frequent quotations from well-known authors which Peruzzi gives, because of the way these are used. He realizes that the *authors* are not *authorities*.

They are not outside of and immune to the living problems of the tongue. In their work, "within that margin of elasticity which the rules of grammar can concede," the dynamic relationship between individual creation and tradition is emphasized; in addition concrete examples are offered for the formation of that linguistic taste the achievement of which is the declared purpose of the booklet. It is of prime importance for the comprehension of the continuity of the Italian linguistic-cultural patrimony for the reader to see Dante quoted next to Moravia, Bilenchi, Ungaretti, etc. The last two chapters, "I tempi del verbo" and "Il congiuntivo" deserve particular mention; they are especially instructive.

The author certainly cannot be blamed for omissions. I should, however, have liked to see mentioned the use of the conditional, particularly when it has the function of the future in indirect discourse. In this case both the present and the perfect can be used: the possible difference between the two tenses was recently discussed by L. Mourin in *Lingua Nostra*, XVII, pp. 8-15, especially p. 15. Likewise, we are told that a general rule for the formation of the plural of names in *-co* and *-go* is missing; why not satisfy the question that naturally arises—why so much variety?—by referring to the historical explanation offered by P. G. Goidanich, particularly as on p. 46 the phenomenon of the palatization of guttural *c* and *g* before *e* and *i* in the passage from Latin to Italian is mentioned? (For a discussion of this entire question see A. Leone, "I nomi in *-co* e *-go*," *Lingua nostra*, XVIII, p. 87-91.)

In conclusion let us say that the volume is rich and very suggestive, and that the author's purpose of prompting the reader to further investigation has been successfully achieved.

[Giuseppe Velli]

Items

IN "9 DOMANDE SUL RO-MANZO" published this August in *Nuovi argomenti* (the review edited by Alberto Moravia and Carocci) as many as ten Italian writers were asked to give their views in response to the nine questions on the novel. Without going into the implicit controversy, it is interesting to sample the answers to the question "Who are your favorite novelists and why?" Giorgio Bassani lists his authors and concludes that he would like himself to write something that approached the "lyricism and tension" of *I Malavoglia* *Senilità* and above all the *Scarlet Letter*, "a book," he says, "I cannot reread without being violently moved." Italo Calvino gives the longest lists of preferences or "loves": Stendhal above all, Pushkin, Hemingway, Stevenson, Chekhov, Conrad, Tolstoy, Manzoni ("I love Manzoni because until recently I hated him"), Chesterton ("because he wanted to be the Catholic Voltaire and I wanted to be the Communist Chesterton"), Flaubert, Poe, Twain, Jane Austen ("because I never read her but am happy that she exists"), Gogol, Dostoevsky. . . Such exuberance would not be shared by Eugenio Montale: in his brief response he lists Apuleius, Cer-

vantes, the *Elective Affinities*, Gogol, Turgenev, "and others." After a very wide definition of the novel, Elsa Morante chooses Homer, Cervantes, Stendhal, Melville, Chekhov, and Verga. Her husband, Alberto Moravia, prefers novelists who "empty the sack and say everything they have to say" without regard to convention or conformity. In particular he chooses "comic" novelists: Petronius, Apuleius, Rabelais, Cervantes, Gogol, "and others." The rest did not respond, perhaps for reasons as enigmatic as the choices of those who did.

TO PROVIDE ROME with a green setting the Ministry of Public Works has announced a series of projects, including parks and roads, which should be completed in time for the World Olympics in August and September of 1960. The most important innovation will be an archeological park along the Appian Way. One may hope that it will in effect halt the destruction and desecration of "home-building" speculators. Another project would encompass the Castelli Romani (including Frascati) in an extensive national park just twenty miles south of Rome. Several new roads will give access to the pine groves

of Fregene, the national park of the Abruzzo, and the coast between Civitavecchia and Sperlonga. It does not take a seer to see that the traffic in Rome will rise in congestion and decibels.

NEW BOOKS in English on Italian matters include: *The Stones of Florence* by Mary McCarthy, which appeared this summer in the *New Yorker* and which now is illustrated and between hard covers (Harcourt Brace: New York); *Florence* by Sylvia Sprigge, another view of the city (Viking Press: New York); the second volume of the *Memoirs of Giacomo Casanova* (subtitled "Paris and Prison") in the translation of Arthur Machen (Putnam: New York); *Italian Villas and Palaces* by Georgina Masson, with many plates (Harry N. Abrams: New York); *Report from Palermo* by Danilo Dolci (Orion Press: New York); *The Baron in the Trees*, an English version of *Il barone rampante* (reviewed in IQ 4), by Italo Calvino (Random House: New York); Francis Toye's *Giuseppe Verdi, His Life and Works*, reissued as a Vintage Book (Knopf: New York); and *Painting in XVIII Century Venice* by M. Levey (Phaidon, Doubleday: Garden City). In England several books have been announced which may make their way across the Atlantic: Alberto Moravia's *The Wayward Wife and Other Stories* (trans-

lated by Angus Davidson); A. J. Wyte's *The Evolution of Modern Italy* (re-issued); *Italian Stories of Today*, edited by John Lehmann; and *The Risorgimento* by Archibald Colquhoun.

THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC National Congress, held at the end of October in Florence, ended in a display of formal harmony and pledges of continued party solidarity. The ninety-man national council elected by the party congress, however, was more clearly divided into two groups than has ever been the case in the past. The moderate center-right group (*dorotei*) led by the present party secretary-general Aldo Moro received 52 seats and can count on one additional far right councilor, Giulio Andreotti. The "progressive" center-left *fanfaniani*, led by former secretary-general and former prime minister Amintore Fanfani received 36 seats and can probably count on the additional support of Luigi Granelli, elected as the councilor of the *sinistra di Base*. Moro, however, was compelled to deplore the present dependence of his party on Fascist and Monarchist votes inside the national parliament and to enunciate once more the anti-Fascist character of Christian Democracy. There is nothing, consequently, which demonstrates that a "clarification" has taken place indicating that the party has decided to move

in a determined direction. And even the two major groupings which emerged at the congress are not necessarily stable.

These trials and tribulations of the Christian Democratic party in Sicily (See *Trends*) and on the continent reflect the underlying unrest of the country in which economic levels remain so generally low. The recent report to the Council of Ministers of Professor Pasquale Saraceno (August, 1959) analyzing what might be called the failure, up to now, of the Vanoni plan (for the economic development of Italy and the ending of mass unemployment), details this economic basis of the political troubles. (See the analysis of the Saraceno report made by Giovanni Terranova, "Una politica per gli investimenti," *Nord e Sud*, October, 1959, pp. 86-92. Only in the area of housing (mainly luxury) did production exceed the planned increases. Agriculture production ran 70% behind the plan and the South is still predominantly agricultural.) This may explain the rumor that the Sicilian Christian Social Union may jump the Straits of Messina and run a ticket in the forthcoming local election in Reggio di Calabria. It helps to explain the persistence of the Communist strength as well as the characterization of the Italian political system as one of "stabilized instability."

THE GIANNINI FOUNDATION of Agricultural Economics of the University of California has been awarded a grant of \$125,000 by the Ford Foundation to assist in the development of a center for advanced training and research in agricultural economics at the University of Naples in Italy during the next five years. The Ford Foundation also made a parallel grant to the University of Naples for strengthening of the center. The Italian government will contribute funds to the center approximately equal to the Ford Foundation grants to the two universities. The University of Naples formally established the center on June 17, 1959; it will begin offering courses on December 1, 1959.

EMILIO G. SEGRÈ who was awarded the Nobel prize for Physics (with O. Chamberlain) for 1959 has had a distinguished career in Italy and in the United States. Born in Tivoli, Italy, in 1905, he left his native country in 1938 and became an American citizen in 1944. He obtained his doctor's degree in physics at the University of Rome in 1928 and taught there until 1935. One of the most important influences in his career was his association at Rome with Enrico Fermi. From 1935 to 1938 he taught at the University of Palermo, and in 1938 he joined the staff of the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory at Berkeley. In 1943 he went to the Los Alamos Laboratory of

the Manhattan Engineer District as a leading member of the scientific staff, and after the war, in 1946, he returned to the Berkeley campus of the University of California as Professor of Physics. Professor Segrè has received many honors and is a member of numerous scientific societies. Recently he was made a Commander of Merit of the Republic of Italy, and was chosen by his colleagues at Berkeley as the Faculty Research Lecturer for 1959-60.

THE LITERARY REVIEW, published by the Fairleigh Dickinson University of Teaneck, New Jersey, devoted its latest number (Fall 1959) to Italian writers. Translations from Elsa Morante, Domenico Rea, Anna Banti, Gianni Manzini, Italo Calvino, Ennio Flaiano, Dino Buzzati and others, are preceded by an essay on Contemporary Italian Fiction by Giacinto Spagnoletti. Among the poets there are translations from Giorgio Caproni, Vittorio Sereni, Alfonso Gatto, Pier Pa-

olo Pasolini, Rocco Scotellaro and others. The number also contains two more essays; one by Claudio Gorlier on Contemporary Italian Literary Criticism, and one by Nicola Chiaromonte on Contemporary Italian Theatre. Of special interest are a number of drawings by such artists as Afro, Giorgio Morandi, Marino Marini, Mino Maccari and others.

BERNARD BERENSON died in his villa *I Tatti* in Settignano on October 7. He was 94 years old. Born in Lithuania in 1865, he was brought to the United States in his early childhood. Brought up in Boston, he attended Harvard and soon after his graduation he went to Italy where he spent most of his long and active life. His critical evaluation of the painters of the Italian Renaissance, his "discovery" of the Sienese painters, and his theories of art criticism have been of fundamental significance. The *Italian Quarterly* will publish an article on the beloved art critic in its next number.

